

**Post 9/11 Trauma:
A Mother's Concern about her Adolescent Daughter in a
Canadian Public-School**

by

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Abstract

Amidst of the Islamophobic discourse in a post 9/11 context, this study reflects on my experiences of educating my 11-year old daughter as she constructs her ELL (English Language Learner) identity by hiding her Muslim identity in a Canadian public-school language classroom. The study suggests that the negative image of Muslims as well as the rising hypothesis, “All Muslims are terrorists”, restricts her from expressing her individual experience, opinion and commitment in her L2 (English as a Second/Additional Language) classroom. To write my reflection I have taken into account one particular incident of her classroom practice and the process of making meaning of that incident. My reflective analysis (Dewey, 1910) helps me gain a better understanding of my journey as a mother and strengthens my identity as a Muslim L2 teacher. My daughter attempts to accommodate her expressions along the discourses preferred by her classroom community that gives rise to her multiple, shifted, conflicted, contradictory, and hidden identities (Norton, 1998). It is her awareness of the representation or misrepresentation of her religion by the dominant Western culture that impacts her social and educational trajectories as a learner. Her classroom experiences illustrate how Muslim students may continually negotiate/construct their identity positions and how the affordances and constraints of their religious identity can lead to divergent learning outcomes (Sowden, 2007). I draw on the notions of Language socialization (Duff, 2007) and identity and investment (Norton, 2005) to examine how language intersects with other social categories such as religion. This paper concludes with a call for increased attention to a learner’s religious identity, which may closely relate to successful acquisition of English as an additional language.

Keywords: L2 learner identity; Muslim identity; hidden identity; 9/11 and Islamophobic discourse

Dedication

To my mother, who unfortunately did not have the opportunity to complete her higher education, dedicated her entire life to ensure that I do not miss that opportunity

&

To my father, who taught me how to be ambitious

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Current multicultural classrooms in the West are composed of a mixture of students from various languages, cultures, races, and religions over the world. Therefore, it may be too simplistic to assume that their developing abilities and identities in classrooms is linked only to teaching/learning activities, abilities, or learning styles. While these are highly significant factors, to a great extent the construction of identity depends on the experiences students encounter in classrooms and more generally at school that encourage and facilitate participation and engagement of diverse groups of learners. Goodall (2008) asserts that:

We learn to see things in one way and not another because we are born, reared, and acculturated in a particular way and not the other. How we learn to see and interpret the world is therefore a product of where we come from and who we are. (p. 352)

Individual experience plays a significant role in how multidimensional and complex learner identities are formed in multicultural classrooms, particularly when coming from different cultures with languages other than the mainstream one. English language learning in an English-speaking country like Canada promotes the shaping of complex learner identities. This happens because learning a language is often viewed from a deficit perspective, in which the language and culture of origin of the learners are seen as a detriment or barrier to the acquisition of the English language (Cummins, 1979). Another feature of culture – religion – also has an impact in the formation of learner identity (Peek, 2005; Shah, 2009; Tindongan, 2011). Therefore, enactment of identity in such classrooms cannot be examined in term of isolated, neutral, or non-problematic processes. Instead, identity is influenced by a variety of cultural, social, economic, and political factors and contexts that contribute to the formation of learners' sense of themselves. In this regard, Wenger (1998) rightly confirmed that a person's identity is socially constructed, changed, and reformed because one's identity is "a layer of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other" (p. 151).

Many educational and social theorists such as Giddens (1991) and Bourdieu (1988) argue that identity formation is a process, not an essentialized fixed product. It is multi-dimensional and fluid since learners participate in multiple communities in diverse social contexts (Norton, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2006). Therefore, creating and maintaining an environment that helps learners construct positive identities may present challenges for educators. This study is an effort to respond to that challenge. It sets out to explain diversity by looking briefly at how 'difference' is constructed, and how the learners' religious (Muslim) identities are formulated. This study will also explore the impact of these identity impositions on the learners' self-identification, and how this may restrict their participation in a classroom.

There is extensive research on identity in sociology, social psychology and feminist theory (Giddens, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Brah, 1996; Hall, 1996), but the lack of recognition of religion as a category of influence suggests that religious identity construction has not been fully explored. To that end, it is worth mentioning that, among learner identities very little research has been conducted in the area of identity construction of English language learners/English as a second language learners (ELL/L2) of Muslim learners in the Canadian context specifically after 9/11 context. After the tragic attacks that took place on September 11, 2001 in America by Islamic extremists known as “Al-Qaeda”. Muslims are blamed and hated in the West because of their “religion and culture (including appearance) more generally” (Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007). The stereotypical discourses (Gee, 2012)—using language, thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, acting—of the non-Muslims tend to offer undesirable, yet widely recognizable, positions to L2 learners who identify themselves as Muslims. The learners of this particular religious group are now being positioned in multiple ways due to the basis of their religious identification. They are often isolated and considered to be difficult to belong to or integrate by the mainstream student community (Housee, 2011; Rissanen, Tirri, & Kuusisto, 2015).

To understand and explore the underpinnings of how Muslim background learners develop their identities, a few studies were conducted to unpack the process of identity construction of Muslim students in the post 9/11 context. Giroir (2014), for example, focused on how international adult Muslim students were positioned negatively because

of the existing inequitable power in society, although later they positioned themselves positively. Another study showed how Muslim adult students found it difficult to “integrate because of their Muslim culture” (Housee, 2011). As for example, the non-alcoholic culture of Muslims sometimes makes it difficult for them to socialize with others. Some other studies depicted immigrant children from other racial groups as well as Muslims as “silenced” and “alienated” because of their difficulty in integration (Bowl, 2003). Peek (2005) mentioned that Muslims, usually at their first stage of identity construction, take up their “ascribed identity” (which is less powerful) as granted identity unlike the other stages where they have more powerful/positive and strong senses of identity (discussed in detail in Chapter 2: Literature Review section).

The focus of this study is to see how a Muslim adolescent forms her “ascribed religious identity” and the emergence of religion as the most salient source of personal identity and how that impacts her learning in the context of Canadian public-school classrooms. I posit, through my personal experience as a Muslim living in the West that being aware of forming an ascribed religious identity is foundational; therefore, one requires strength in order to better integrate in the community or to belong to the mainstream despite having religious differences with the dominant society. Apart from forming other identities, I have focused on the formation of adolescent Muslim identity. It is because adolescence is an age when young people are more aware of forming identity (Ajrouch, 2004). It is also because at this stage they often learn how to use the target language/functional English in the midst of the negative narratives found around their religion (Giroir, 2014) in order to better socialize in their classes and respect diversity (Parekh, 2000a, 2000b). This study originates from my personal interest in educating my adolescent child, Sarah, who was born and brought up in a Muslim family, and is being educated in a Canadian non-Muslim public-school system (discussed in brief in the background section of this chapter).

I draw upon my lived experience of raising and educating my 11-year old daughter at the intersection of her English language learning and her formation of Muslim learner identity in regard to her strong sense of belonging to the dominant classroom community. This study comprises my observations and interpretations of my child’s experiences that reveal who she is personally as an L2 learner who conceals her

Muslim identity. To write my reflection, I took into account one particular incident of her classroom practice and the process of making meaning of that incident that also helped me gain a better understanding of my journey as a Muslim and the mother of a daughter who is willing/not willing to self-identify as a Muslim, as well as a Muslim English language teacher. My daughter tried to accommodate her expressions regarding her religion and religious identity along the discourses preferred by her teacher and classroom community that gave rise to her multiple, shifted, conflicted, contradictory, and hidden identities (See the discussion section in Chapter 4). It was her awareness of the representation or misrepresentation of her religion by the dominant western culture that impacted her social and educational trajectories as a learner. This study is an effort to respond to the challenges she faced along the existing discourses of Islamophobia in constructing her Muslim L2 learner identity.

Through critical reflection I share one particular experience my daughter had that sparked my personal interest in this area in Chapter 3. I interpret my reflections by interpreting my daughter's experience to further understand my Muslim identity. Her experience is important because as van Manen (1990) asserts:

[An individual] is not just something [she] automatically [is], it is also something [she] must try to be ---- to find [herself] in the concreteness and fullness of [her] lived life. (p. 5).

We learn through experience (Dewey, 1910): learning takes place meaningfully through our experience from life. We acquire knowledge through experience. The conception of reflection as reconstructing experience (MacKinnon, 1989b) includes the process of organizing experience to bring about new understandings of taken for granted assumptions. As a teacher, a mother, and a lifelong learner, the aim of this thesis is to allow me to become a reflective person capable of articulating the experience(s) that have shaped my understanding of Muslim identity. What does it mean to be a Muslim student today? How does the Muslim religion affect one's identity? How does being Muslim impact one's participation in a Canadian classroom? are the questions that I would like to address to reconstruct my experience. The intent is to bring about meaning at present and to generate possible future applications.

Drawing on the experiences of my daughter, I illustrate how religion impinges on the identity and learning process of Muslim learners. The study uses a sociocultural perspective of second language in use to the negotiation of identity. It illustrates how a Muslim L2 learner chooses different pathways for integration, engagement in classroom participation, and identity construction. Subsequently, the topic requires greater attention in language education research since religion could become a powerful base of personal identification as well as learning (Peek, 2005). The study is designed to add to the body of knowledge on religious identity of Muslim adolescents and how that is formed through social practices of the dominant culture in a language classroom. How their identities and aspects of religion may affect the English language classroom and its participants and what the teachers might do in response to the identities and their ramifications in the classroom, are subject to study. For that purpose, next few sub-sections will briefly discuss the background of the study, my personal interest in the study, English language learning as a means of integration into the dominant classroom community, religion and religious education in Canadian public-schools followed by the overview of the thesis.

1.1. Background of the Study

Many different issues including political turmoil, wars, revolutions, disasters, and labor market trends prompted refugees and immigrants from around the world to settle in some developed countries in the west - in Europe, Australia, and North America (Ebaugh 2000; Warner, 1998). Among all other countries, Canada in this regard has a renowned history of accepting people from other cultures and races (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2016). Political instability in the Arab world and Canada's ruling party Liberal's policy of sponsoring refugees from Syria made it possible for Muslims from Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Syria to call Canada their home (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2002). This change in the federal immigration policy led to an unprecedented diversification of the Canadian population over subsequent years (the mid 2010s), as millions of immigrants arrived from Muslim countries. Muslims account for 3.2% of the total population, with a total of over a million as of May 2013, and Islam has become the fastest growing religion in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). Statistics Canada also projects that Muslims are the third largest categories of Canadians after

Christians and “non-religion affiliated” citizens who preferred to be self-identified as such, though the data does not necessarily reflect the religious affiliation of adolescents. These Muslim immigrants and refugees are meeting the economic and labour needs of the country making it one of the most multicultural and religiously diverse nation on earth as Warner (1993) appropriately noted that recent immigrants are racially, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously more heterogeneous than the immigrants of a century ago. “Muslim students [more specifically] are an interesting 'group' of diverse ethnicities, cultures, and nationalities, offering scope for theoretical complexity, which can be a useful analytical tool for exploring other contexts of diversity” (Shah, 2008, p. 524). Since population diversity is a sociological phenomenon managed by states and societies in different ways at different levels (Bauman, 1997), in this regard, ESL (English as a Second Language) is considered as the vehicle of integration and socialization of the diverse communities by Anglophone Canadians.

In this study, children of the citizens, permanent residents, immigrants and refugees in Canada who are from a Muslim background, are referred to as Muslim students, more specifically Muslim adolescent students/learners. The Muslim population is one that experiences stereotyping based on what they look like, how they dress, where they come from, and religious beliefs and practices that are often misconstrued (Giroir, 2014). Moreover, given their multiple identities as adolescents, immigrants, refugees, L2 learners, and Muslims these students face a rough terrain of identity obstacles. Their status as Muslim adolescents has often been problematic (Shah, 2008). Young people invariably encounter identity crisis as they grow into adulthood. Furthermore, they are having to contend with the sense of being an outsider because of a religion that is often misunderstood. Therefore, they must navigate the complexities of school and their own adolescent development as well as socio-cultural differences. The presence of Muslims in the world is complicated by more recent unfortunate events such as what happened on 9/11. The impact of 9/11 on the lives of Muslims in the West has been immense and has resulted in misrepresentation in the media (Peek, 2011; Jackson, 2010). While important to consider, how Muslims are being represented or the obstacles that Muslim adolescents go through is not the purpose of this study. The main focus is how a Muslim learner may

want to identify in an English language classroom in Canada in the post 9/11 context and how that may impact her learning.

1.2. English Language Learning as a Means of Integration and Forming Language Learner Identity in a Canadian Public-School Classroom

Political socialization involves socialization into a culture that supports a particular political structure (Epstein & McGinn, 2000). Schools are regarded as the principal social institutions in society formally charged with engaging children in this process. Here schools aim to create a common understanding of national and patriotic identity in terms of what are imagined by the state to be legitimate expressions (LeBlanc & Walters, 2005). In this most basic understanding of political socialization and education, it is by means of schools that younger generations learn about political philosophy, citizenship, and the core ideology of the society in which they live. Because childhood and adolescence are formative stages for developing social and political orientations, most of the focus on political socialization across national contexts occurs in primary and secondary school systems (Braungart & Braungart, 1997) known as Canadian Public Schools (K-12). These schools are welcoming to the children coming from heterogeneous cultures—providing them opportunities to be educated until the age of eighteen (may vary in different provinces and territories in Canada). Their primary language of instruction is mostly English with the exception of Quebec where the primary language of instruction is French (Official Languages Act, Canada, 1969). Upon arriving in Canada children of other languages and cultures whose first language is not English are assessed and thereby known as ELLs (English Language Learners/L2). According to their age and grade level, they are put in the same classrooms with children who are native speakers of English and other non-native speakers who have already reached a certain level of English proficiency. Their medium of instruction is English; however, they are given an extra hour of English language teaching in a different classroom each day. The instruction through English for other ethnic groups is to prevent the divisiveness of cultural retention of ethnic groups and integrate with the mainstream as being “Canadian”.

To integrate with the mainstream “Canadian” culture, the L2 learners try to learn the language in a new environment; at the same time, they also try to learn the new culture sometimes compromising the culture of their parents. They often transfer their previous ideas and behaviours and adapt new perceptions or patterns of behaviours (Wadsworth, 1996) in order to integrate into the mainstream society. L2 learners in the Canadian context are usually in a stage of integration and adaptation to the language and culture. This daunting experience in a new environment affects the students’ L2 learner and cultural identities (These are discussed in the literature review section in Chapter 2). Canada recognizes non-official cultural identities such as Chinese, Punjabi, Muslims (The Multiculturalism Act, 1971), and promotes immigrants’ smooth integration in the community (as “Canadians”). However, the immigrants despite “their initial desire to preserve their own culture, are usually eager and anxious to integrate into English - speaking community, because it is to their social and economic advantage to do so. In fact, it is a necessity” (IODE, 1964, 9, as cited in Haque, 2012). Therefore, ELLs strive to gradually becoming part of the community either by “hiding”, “sacrificing” and/or “reinventing” or “reconstructing” their identities and, many often are marginalized and endure the consequences of such identity practice since they are often “positioned as ignorant or inferior, [and would] struggle and take actions to put themselves in stronger subject positions” (Burke, 2010, p.27). (This is discussed in detail in the literature review section in Chapter 3). Therefore, schools and classrooms are considered one of the most important settings giving the ELLs chances of constructing, negotiating, and creating different forms of identities according to their cultural differences.

Culture - language, religion and discourse around a religion - is actively involved in the construction of a person’s identity in a specific context. Geertz (1973) defines culture as that which guides a society and embodies a people’s belief systems, rituals, and traditions. It is further defined by Lazar (1993) to include such things as cultural objects, social roles, political and historical events, proverbs, customs and traditions, and beliefs and superstitions. In this regard, the constant struggle of Muslim L2 learners to be included to the mainstream culture, gives rise to the question of how much we are respecting diversity within the student population. It is posing challenges to educators, and demanding revisits to concepts and practices of multiculturalism in Canada. The

differential accommodation of the others (specifically ethnic religions, e.g. Islam) who are positioned peripherally may question national belonging (Haque, 2012) in the Multiculturalism Policy. Therefore, in our public schools learning seems to be a problem since we deal with “the most vulnerable members” (Bayoumi, 2008, p. 109 as cited in Sensoy and Stonesback, 2009) and learning is differentially distributed along the lines of culture, religion, and language background. I am more particular about the learning environment of Muslim children in a setting which is dominated by existing *discourses* - for example, language, text, clothing, gesture, ways of saying, valuing, interacting, feeling, thinking, and believing to be socially recognized “as a given kind of person at a specific time and place” (Gee, 2012, p. 152). The discourses around Muslims and their religion available in media, narratives, and elsewhere being represented by ‘others’ may also impact the learners and their learning in our non-religious public-school classrooms.

1.3. Religious Education and Religious Identity in a Multicultural Classroom in Canadian Public Schools

Religious education refers to teaching about religions and their varied aspects such as beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites, and personal roles. Religious practice or education in schools has various statuses by law in Canada. With the growing level of multiculturalism, religious education in public schools is almost abolished in most of the provinces in Canada (Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982). However, private schools, run either privately or by boards that are open to all citizens and permanent immigrants of Canada, follow their own curriculum of religious education based on the needs of the student population. Some private schools offer teachings of “Christianity” and or “Catholicism” (a religion followed by some Christians) and “Islam” (religion followed by Muslims) as part of their curriculum (Constitution Act, 1867). Apart from these private schools, children are free to obtain education about their religion from their families or other institutions available in community programs. However, I have noted from my personal experience that there is commonality among all religions, ethics, and philosophies of life, such as not telling lies, doing good to others, forgiving others, which

are taught to the students, not as part of a religion but as a part of children's learning process in both public and private schools.

To my view, people oppose religious education in public schools on various grounds. One is that it constitutes a state sponsorship or establishment of whatever religious beliefs are taught. Others argue that if a particular religion is taught in school, children who do not belong to that religion will either feel pressure to conform or be excluded from their peers. Conversely, proponents of religious education argue that religious beliefs have historically socialized people's behaviour and morality. They feel that since religion has its importance in the acquisition of knowledge and the personal development of pupils, teaching religion in schools is important to encourage children to be responsible, spiritually sound adults (Jackson, 2014). This study is not in an argument for or against religious education; however, since everyone clearly has multiple identities, religious or otherwise, any particular identity of a learner should not be considered alone or overlooked when attempting to understand the learner.

In addition, enactment of multiple identities of a learner comes to the forefront at different times; at times, certain identities may not need to be enacted at all. Classrooms in which curriculum is built on classic literature or narratives of Western culture though religion does not come in curriculum, it comes naturally as part of classroom instruction while celebrating mainstream occasions. Celebrations like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter as part of Canadian culture come to the classrooms while assimilating the students into the dominant culture. If that is so, how can we ignore or not inform the children about the religion or religious celebrations of other ethnic groups especially Muslims (here in this study) to whom religion is a part and parcel of their life. To Muslims, their religious identities should not be demonstrated as negative or inferior, or associated with violence and terrorism. In the era of post 9/11, with all the propaganda in media in favour of stereotyping Muslims as violent or terrorists, it is essential that public schools in Canada, as a multicultural and inclusive country and home to people with diverse religious backgrounds, support positive identity construction of adolescents. Nobody should feel inferior or blamed for their beliefs as long as they do not pose a threat to society. However, some Muslims may perceive themselves inferior and/or may be

positioned as inferior because of the misrepresentation of their religion in a western context.

A plethora of research has been done on the issue of constructing Muslim identities; however, participants' difficulties with the English language and how that influences their Muslim identity construction is given less attention. Some studies have reported that the problems occur in selecting topics of conversations because of the lack of shared culture (Novera, 2004; Fotovatian, 2012a & 2012b) which positioned Muslims more clearly outside the Western norm. Cultural differences between what are perceived as Western and Muslim ways of life, particularly with respect to religious norms (appearance: wearing the hijab: head-covering), are creating cultural dissonance, and Muslim children are considered as potentially problematic (Shah, 2009). This is intensified with how dominant-group constructs of Muslim people being informed by media and mainstream's representation of 'others' (Sensoy and Stonebanks, 2009). They have explored the experiences of Muslim students in Western schools. Muslim students often face challenges attending non-Muslim schools and crises forming identities in the "clash of cultures" which is perceived to be inherent in the backgrounds as practicing members of the Islamic faith and the residents of a secular western country. Their study finds that adolescents, marginalized due to their religion, are often considered as being 'other'. This attitude of the 'West' is often influenced by the discourse in the media about the Muslims and Islam. A Muslim participant in their study has experienced comments like, "your people have these issues [violence and terrorism] we hear about when we turn on the television" from his non-Muslim teacher' (p. 45). Sometimes Muslim students feel pressured to be knowledgeable in Islam to be empowered and to repair the damaged identity that is emerged from how the dominant-group constructs of Muslim people. Thus, Islamophobia puts participants like Latif in a complex social situation forming complex Muslim identity (Sensoy, 2011). Since his mom wears a hijab, his family is often profiled when traveling. Living in the 'margin' of mainstream social life prompts him to give suggestions to his audience, 'Think harder before you judge' (p. 334).

Taking up of Muslim identity is a matter of question to the dominant society, media and elsewhere on a regular basis. For an instance, when an attack or killing happens anywhere in the world, if it is done by people from other religious beliefs their religion is not commonly mentioned except if attackers or killers are from a Muslim background. Contemporary issues like the Twin Tower Attack called the 9/11 incident, Rise of ISS, Paris attack, Belgium bombing have contributed to intolerance in our society and this prejudice is coming into classrooms. To support the present state - to best take into account the interests of both minority (Muslim) and majority (Christian) – cultural socialization is becoming salient since misrepresentation of Muslims may affect Muslim adolescents as well as society as a whole. Therefore, basic education about Islam is significant not only for the majority pupils to understand, and interact with those who think and behave differently but also for the pupils of that particular belief to construct their identity positively, to integrate and to achieve academic excellence.

Classrooms currently are increasingly multicultural, thus issues related to religion may arise in language classes as well. Handling those issues with appropriate knowledge is becoming a burning issue for educators (Abo-Zena, 2012). It gets tougher when there is contradiction with the popular discourses of mass media. Since we live in a culture of communicating and socializing in English (Ochs, 1998); and we live in a necessarily plurilingual world within global communities; since migration is now an everyday phenomenon, the importance of learning an L2 and at the same time reviving the religion (Peek, 2005) are more significant than ever before. Therefore, the need to develop more inclusive practices is now a necessity.

The discourse about Muslims and their religion (briefly discussed in the next section) that is currently appropriated by media (Said, 1981; Ahmed, 1992; Hall, 1997; Ahmed, 2007) is at odds with the notion of diversity (Haque, 2012). The student population across Canada is increasingly reflective of diverse cultures, religions and ethnicities. This rich diversity may become a challenge for educational leaders, teachers, and policy-makers in the absence of an understanding of diverse sources of knowledge people draw on for directing their beliefs and daily practices. Since the management of diversity was constructed as a matter of individual choice for schools, rather than a legal requirement underpinned by rights to recognition and respect for all (Shah, 2008), how

Muslim identity within an Islamophobic discourse will be treated as becoming a matter to explore.

For many Muslims, Islam is the key determinant in their lives. Yet schools are not always sensitive to this. As they enter through the school portals students are required to leave their religion at home, because so often the school, as a secular institution, is simply unaware of the centrality of Islam in the life of its Muslim pupils (Coles, 2004). However, Rissanen's (2014) study took place in Eurocentric contexts to examine different roles of religion in the classroom:

When there is room for the interplay between liberal educational and religious perspectives, the socializing practices of religious education can contribute to educational goals. (p. 136)

While arguing for the inclusion of religious education or Islam at school is not the purpose of my research, religion may serve as a powerful tool for bonding a vastly diverse community in the sense that the philosophies/principles/traditions of Islam as well as other religions are almost the same as the fundamental values being taught at our public schools. For instance, doing good to others, never thinking of doing harm to others, never telling lies, sharing things with friends and neighbors, showing respect to everyone etc. are not something outside Islam. Instead of highlighting the differences between Islam and the mainstream and the negative discourses around Muslims, foregrounding the similarities and positive stories of Muslims may bring all the learners together by removing their fear of Islam (Islamophobia).

1.4. Islamophobia: Discourse Around Muslims Before and After 9/11

Islamophobia is a notion formed by combining Islam and the suffix -phobia, implying the basic meaning "fear of Islam" or "aversion to Islam". The definition of the term can vary. The Oxford English Dictionary (2016) defines Islamophobia as "intense dislike or fear of Islam, esp. as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims". The dictionary pinpoints the term's first known usage in English to 1923, although the

historical origin of the term is contested. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2016) also gives an example definition of Islamophobia:

Stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general refers to set of discourses, behaviours and structures which express feelings of anxiety, fear, hostility and rejection towards Islam and/or Muslims especially in a non-Muslim context”. (3.2.5)

Particularly since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, a variety of surveys and polls as well as reported incidents have consistently given credence to the existence of Islamophobia in the West which has manifested itself as vandalism of mosques and physical assaults on Muslims including violence against Muslim women wearing the “hijab”, “niqab” (face-cover), “burka” (whole body cover) and men having a beard or wearing a turban. The number of Islamophobic incidents has significantly increased in the last two years, for example, in January 2017, six Muslims were killed in a shooting at a Quebec City mosque in Canada.

Islamophobia has been condemned by Canadian governments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels; however, the Canadian media have played a mixed role in their coverage of Islamophobia, and have been described as having either perpetuated it or countered it for Canadian audiences (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). Canada’s public education system has also been scrutinized for its role as the site of Islamophobic incidents and of the development of Islamophobic attitudes in youth. Some major issues that Muslim students are experiencing today include media hostility, association with terrorism, social exclusion, harassment, stereotyping, negative assumptions, and religious hatred (Ahmed, 2003; Parekh, 2000; Richardson, 2004; Vertovec, 2002), which impact on their self-perceptions, their schooling, and their social experiences in school (Shah 2006a). Students from Muslim backgrounds find difficulties not only with English but also with the combined power of language and religion. The political strife of 9/11 was not the making of Muslims in general, yet they are part of the “collateral damage” of international politics. Therefore, how much the religion of Muslim students exists in a classroom and how the L2 learners form their Muslim identities are subjects to study. Due to the current discourse around Muslims, many learners may not only try to separate their Muslim identities but may also try to ignore them superficially while working on

being a member of the dominant community. For this reason, it is essential to know, albeit briefly, what is happening in relation to being Muslim before and after 9/11.

To diverge from simplistic notions of race as a decontextualized, objective condition, the concept of racialization has been used in the literature to explain race as a “socially constructed response to sociocultural, political, and historical conditions at a given point in time” (Rich & Troudi, 2006, p. 617). It has been well documented that racist portrayals of Arabs and Muslims have a history that spans over a century. Shaheen’s (2003) study of popular film found that nearly all of the representations of Arabs (95%) are disempowering, most often depicted as kidnapping or raping a light-skinned maiden, expressing hatred of Jews and Christians, being religious fanatics, and having a love for wealth and power. Beyond popular media portrayals, representations of the Muslim Other have existed in the Western world for over a millennium (Said, 1994), and more recently in US media for nearly a century (Shaheen, 2003). Shaheen’s study of the representation of Arabs in twentieth-century US popular film culminates with the perspective that Muslims and Arabs are indelibly linked in their portrayal as the perennial anti-American, greedy, and violent among a host of other images that systematically dehumanize these peoples. Lippi-Green (1997) has also talked about the negative depiction of the Muslim Other in Disney films. The portrayal of Muslims through both news and entertainment media construct the phenomenon of Islamophobia. As such, the growing anti-Islamism of recent decades is illustrative of how discourses of otherness and inferiority can be applied to ethnic groups on the grounds of cultural markers such as shared religion, language, and beliefs. The new racism frameworks (Ajrouch, 2004) illuminate the increasingly contested terrain of distinctions between categories of race and ethnicity giving way to a particular phenomenon of “Islamophobia” in real-world contexts. Dunn et al. (2007) contended that Islamophobia is informed by both “old” and “new” logics, being based not “on some supposed biological grounds, but on religion and culture (including appearance: wearing hijab and niqab for women and having turban on head and having beard for men) more generally” (p. 567). For many Muslims, a hijab/scarf, beards, or a dress code that can vaguely be associated with Islam has led to overt hostility (Coles, 2004). The participants (Giroir, 2014) whose religious identities were contested in the wake of 9/11 because of the pressure of their peers, gave up their cultural

look by shaving off their beards. (This is discussed in Chapter 2 in the literature review section).

“Discourse” requires a brief explanation. According to Gee (2005), discourse describes a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network” (p. 78). Discourse is no longer seen as isolated from its sociocultural context. Gee (2005) reminds us, in our day-to-day lives we become engaged in multiple social interactions, take different social roles, and accordingly construct and enact multiple social identities. People from other countries often feel the pressure of adjustment to the new environment, discourses and culture of a new country. On top of that, if a race is stereotyped, they may find it harder to adjust. As for example, the discourses available in media about Muslims that “All Muslims are Terrorists” declared by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS, 2017) aired on the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC news report – July 14, 2017) cause us think how these discourses can marginalize or inferiorize learners and the formation of their identities on the basis of their cultural or ethnic background (Zamel, 1997). However, students might be best understood in the context of their complex identities in a time of social and political instability, for students are not passive pawns in the socialization process and their resilience can be expressed through a covert intercultural discourse (Shah, 2008).

My research objective is to suggest that schools and classrooms with students from Muslim backgrounds need to carefully consider the social contexts in which these students are integrated: using language with other social practices (doing, valuing, interacting etc.). As we seek to understand these students, we need to recognize not only that they are misrepresented, but also that their identities are inscribed by their cultural position that can lead to different and unequal educational opportunities. A multicultural classroom in Canada could provide a context in which Muslim adolescent ELLs are able to develop a powerful, transcultural identity, discursively constructed through different cultural perspectives and literacies; however, existing tensions in media and elsewhere may provide a negative setting for Muslim students to construct negative identities.

The current emphasis in Canada on celebrating/valuing diversity, respect for all and widening participation are moves forward from policies of integration, belonging and multiculturalism. However, these notions and approaches are ethnocentric in orientation, and embedded in Western philosophy and values (Dimmock, 2000). These do not acknowledge or incorporate relevant conceptualizations from other cultures and knowledge sources (Shah, 2006a). This imposes limitations on their appropriateness and applicability to multi-ethnic contexts with implications for both theory and practice, and hinders enrichment of conceptualizations. It sets out to explain diversity by looking briefly at how 'difference' is constructed, and how the learners' ethnic identities are formulated, debating the impact of these constructions on the Muslim learners' self-esteem, and exploring the interplay with educational achievement. In such a context, how is their educational experience implicated in the community they desire for themselves where the reports of attacks on mosques and on women wearing the hijab (head-covering) affect the community? The negative post 9/11 image of Islam created in the media and among non-Muslim communities might put an extra pressure on the Muslim students. It is getting difficult to be a Muslim student in the West with so much criticism in the media, ordinary conversation about 'radical Islam' and 'terrorism', and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Accordingly, in what ways and to what degree recent political events involving Arabs and Muslims as well as an increasingly racialized discourse of Islamophobia in the media and wider society, have affected learners' experiences in the learning community is the focus of this study. My interest is in the discourses around Muslims and the sense of belonging from the lived experience of an individual (my daughter, Sarah), which may support and/or challenge the larger circulating discourse about language learning and Muslim identity formation (This will be discussed in Chapter 3: Literature Review).

1.5. My Personal Interest in the Study

Several factors motivated me writing this paper. I am academically influenced by two of my courses that I had taken in my TEAL program. The first one shed light on how social, cultural and political structures have an impact producing the language learner

identities of minority children. The second one stressed how those structures create multiple forms of institutional inequality to students of a certain race and religious background based on popular media representations, public discourses etc. These courses mostly brought language related issues of ethnic minorities' (i.e. First Nation, African-American, Punjabi and Chinese) experiences into light. However, I realized that among other racial and religious minority groups, Muslim population is rapidly growing in today's classrooms, yet had not received much attention in current research. Experiences from my personal life have an influence in writing this paper as well, particularly being a member of a Muslim community dealing with experiences of my daughter who represents less than 2% of her school population. This compelled me to address possible attitudes of the mainstream towards invisible religiosity in a school context.

My research interest in Muslim identity is rooted in my personal experience as a landed skilled immigrant, an English as a Second Language [ESL] teacher, in Canada in 2009. Because of the 9/11 incident and the available stories regarding the harassment of the Muslim women wearing 'hijab' (head scarf) in the West, I was encouraged by my husband and some friends to take off my hijab that I had been using for last twelve years. As soon as I landed in Vancouver (British Columbia), I stopped using my hijab with the fear that I would be a target to racial discrimination and harassment. Without the hijab, that was part of my dress code, that symbolized my Muslim identity, I felt like a fish out of water. I felt sort of lost with the feeling that I did not belong to the mainstream Canadian culture nor did I belong to my Muslim culture. After having conversation with myself for three years, I started using headscarf once again from 2012 onward.

Along with my own experience regarding constructing a Muslim identity in Canada, my experience dealing with my 11- year-old middle-schooler (grade 6) daughter increased the intensity to the problem of constructing my "Muslim Identity". My daughter, Sarah, who does not wear a head scarf like me, made me rethink how one's religious identity, though it is not visible through appearance, might be at stake because of the discourse around race. One of her classroom experiences shows how she did not take part in certain classroom practices and how that impacted her identity—unwilling to self-identify as "Muslim". Sarah started kindergarten in Canada and was having no issues regarding her language and expression of thoughts (Our regular conversations with her

teachers and her report cards consistently show that.). However, in her English language classes in lessons about contemporary issues - like 9/11, rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Paris attacks - Sarah seemed to not participate or contribute as much as she used to do by expressing her own feelings or opinions. When I asked her the reason, she confirmed that she did that in order not to let her teachers and peers know the fact that she belongs to the Muslim community. Muslims are stereotyped negatively by the dominant society, and labeled “Islamic/ Muslim terrorists” in popular narratives used in her classroom. Even after my conversation with her, she continued “hiding” her identity by accepting the discourses of her classroom community that believes in dominant norms and culture presented in Media and elsewhere around Muslims.

As a mom, and as an educator I am concerned about Muslim children’s identity construction and their unwillingness in class participation that may affect their performance at school due to the cultural misrepresentations by themselves and by others. Therefore, I aim to find more closely how the post 9/11 discourse about Islam and Muslim places learners like Sarah in a position where they struggle to construct their identities through their ongoing discursive practices within school communities. My daughter’s experience prompted me to rationalize my interest on the issue of Muslim adolescents and their formation of Muslim identity in a language classroom and focus on the following questions.

1.6. Research Questions

- How do Muslim students feel while taking part in classrooms about contemporary issues closely related to their religion in the midst of the dominant discourse around the race?
- In what ways are they positioned by others, and how do they, in turn, position themselves (as an individual and as a group) in ways that grant or refuse their Muslim learner identity? What influences them to accept or refuse their Muslim identity?
- In what ways do we understand Muslim learners’ identities while their religion is feared by dominant society in post 9/11 context?

- How do the experiences of an individual challenge ideologies of language learning and notions of belonging in a multicultural state?

What I hope to achieve through the framing of these questions is to create a space in which learners are not resistant, but where they have an agentive capacity to evaluate and negotiate constraints of their religious position in the midst of structures that may subjugate them and their participation. Schools ought not simply reproduce the social inequalities of wider society; rather, they ought to provide a space that can not only enrich Muslim students' language development but also empower their Muslim identity. With self-identification as a "Muslim", the learners may be able to garner language-related as well as social support. They will grow more comfortable and receive more support to explore aspects of their Muslim heritage.

1.7. Overview of the Thesis:

This dissertation has six chapters. Following this first chapter (Introduction), I put forward theoretical framework of L2 learner identity as well as Muslim learner identity in Chapter 2. Then I review relevant literature in Chapter 3, drawing on some empirical studies focusing on the construction of Muslim learner identity in a non-Muslim country (Canada). I argue that existing qualitative studies fall short of meeting multiple dimensions of language, identity, and religion (i.e. Islam). This chapter ends with a summary of the main findings of the literature, identifies a gap in the literature, and articulates my research questions. In Chapter 4, based on interpretative critical analysis, I look at how the question of Muslim identity in L2 learning has been addressed by researchers depending on their participants' experiences of learning the language, which have given rationale to my research questions. In Chapter 5, I discuss and analyze my research queries followed by describing the limitations of my study along with some recommendations in the last chapter. Chapter 6 reflects on how, as an educator, I can be an active participant in sharing with educators and all stakeholders a redefinition of the purpose and aims of education. Central to such dialogue is an urgent need to shed light on Muslim L2 learner identity. The text may engage the readers in pedagogic reflection on how we live with adolescents as parents, teachers, or educators since teaching and

parenting are identical phenomena. The activity of teaching, parenting, educating, or generally living with children in concrete situations as were experienced by my daughter may give rise to questions in the world that we as researchers need to address in a pedagogic way.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework of L2 Learner Identity and Muslim Learner Identity

2.1. Overview.

The identity manifestations of L2 learners (in this paper L2 learners in an English Language speaking country like Canada) include the pressures of being marginalized individuals to acquire English language and Canadian culture in order to function in mainstream society. Keeping a foot in each of two worlds is the job of a minority; the dominant group has no such burden. Members of privileged mainstream culture need not pay attention to how marginalized peoples manage their lives as minorities, but marginalized peoples must constantly negotiate their own identities against the backdrop of the dominant society. These various manifestations of identity may be conceived of as coping strategies of integration and belonging for young people who may adopt a variety of identities, depending on the environment in which they find themselves at any given time.

Theories from sociology, sociolinguistics and cultural studies consider second language learning as a social practice (Bourdieu, 1991; Norton, 2000, 2001, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2002). All these studies share the view that intercultural interactions “do not occur in a vacuum” (Giles & Bourhis, 1994, p. 167). It is believed in traditional humanistic approach in Western philosophy that the question of identity relates to individuals’ personalities, motivation and other distinctive characteristics. This approach has been dominant in the arena of second language acquisition for a long time. However, such an understanding is limited in the sense that it does not pay attention to the fact that these individual characteristics are not static but changeable based on sociocultural or sociopolitical factors. Accordingly, to form a conceptual framework for this study I draw on Language Socialization Theory (Duff, 2007) which suggests that language learner identities are multiple and they change over time and space. My conceptualization of learner identity is based on Norton’s (2005) concept of identity and investment.

2.2. Language Socialization

Duff's (2007) language socialization theory reminds us that "one crucial aspect of language learning is that particular kinds of linguistic and non-linguistic cues help people understand the sociocultural contexts they are in or that are being referred to" (p. 315). It is argued that in multicultural and asymmetrical context such as the one that I studied, the Muslim student's choice of participation strategies may be tied to the language, social, and religious factors embedded in the background context of the communication as well as participation (Fotovatian, 2012). Therefore, the participant's communication plot and strategies may have the potential to be telling, signaling the social factors inherent in the background of interactions. It is essential to take these factors into consideration before making any elaboration on the participants' choices of communication strategies. Duff (2007) asserts:

The coexistence of participants' multiple communities and sociolinguistic norms, Languages – and identities must be taken into account better. – [I]ndividuals' relationship to, and participation in, local (as well as remote) communities of practice, – remains one of providing evidence for the cognitive, linguistic, social, and cultural learning that takes place within situated practices. We should also try to take into account learners' status and levels of participation within their chosen communities, the factors that prevent or enable greater integration and success (if that is the goal), and the consequences of that involvement (or lack of involvement). Thus, language educators and researchers must strive to understand better not only the micro- and macro-processes of language socialization but also how the linguistic socialization students engage in at present (as well as their prior experiences, if known) affects their future activities, opportunities, and identities. (p. 318)

In a Western or Eurocentric context (countries like Canada), educators and researchers are in constant search for socializing students in language and culture in schools since humans learn throughout the life cycle through deliberate instruction (Poirier & Hussey, 1982 as cited in Erickson, 1987). While learning the language in this

situation, L2 learners face different challenges from their learning environment, teachers, or peers mostly because of their culture since it is often viewed as a barrier in language socialization. Sometimes the newer L2 learners are referred to as “Boaters” who just landed in a new country with limited cultural competencies by the more fluent L2 learners (Ajrouch, 2004 as cited in Tindongan, 2011). Regarding the identities of the ELLs, there is a dominant/prevaling discourse that they are “linguistically isolated” which is true sometimes with connection to their culture. L2 acquisition means learning the L2 and the culture of the L2: these are integrated processes. Acquiring competence in L2 means learning categories and norms of L2 culture. In other words, L2 culture in turn provides the norms of the use of L2. Therefore, a major functional feature of language is to make ELLs socialize through L2 as well as socialize to use L2 (Ochs, 1998).

Consequently, one of the main objectives of English language teaching in public schools in Canada is to make learners members of a community that they can socialize, belong to, and identify themselves with. Many ELLs are often motivated to learn the language due to their desire to be part of the community or to belong to the community (Norton, 2006). After moving to a new country to live, minority students try to seek out new voices and cultural values. Another way of expressing this idea is to say that they seek to define themselves in relation to the context in which they find themselves. However, during the course of language learning in another country, ELLs have a tendency to identify themselves with reference to the social groups or categories they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). They try to be invested in the discourse system embedded in a particular community in order to become members of that community (Wenger, 1998). Many often position themselves flying in between the two cultures: some of which reflected their ethnic cultural values and others their Canadian values. To them, for instance, home means Canada which may or may not be different to their parents’ concept of home. They do not try to be different; they do not feel the same either. Many are much more isolated from the host culture than others. Children who grow up without the majority views and beliefs of the society may find themselves on the edge of that society: may have the feeling that they have never been fully adjusted and may find themselves being an outcast. L2 learners coming from different cultures often construct strong or weak identities depending on their affiliation or participation to a

community as Wenger (2000) appropriately says: “Identity is a lived experience of belonging (or not belonging) [and] a strong identity involves deep connections with others through shared histories and experiences, reciprocity, affection, and mutual commitments” (p. 239). People may find entering a new social group very hard when their values and practices are different from that of the target community. Ivanič (1998) points out that, people may face an identity crisis, which is a “mismatch between the social contexts which have constructed their identities in the past and the new social contexts which they are entering” (p. 12).

2.3. Sociocultural Theories on L2 Learner Identity and Investment:

Drawing on poststructuralist theory, Norton (2000) argues that identity is non-unitary and contradictory. It is not a fixed construct but must be understood in light of the individual's relationship to the broader social, political, and economic world (Norton, 2000). In this view, identity is fluid, and it changes across time and space Wenger (1998). It is not something that one can turn on and off: it is neither unitary nor fragmented. For instance, when a mom is at home, she is not a student or a teacher at that time; however, she cannot completely shake off her student or teacher identity as well. According to Wenger (1998), identity also shifts over time with one's various forms and levels of participation and membership in a community. These memberships sometimes do conflict, influence, complement and enrich each other, and if one wants to combine, confront, or reconcile these various aspects of one's identity that means s/he is growing personally.

Identities are discursively negotiated in language interactions and the ties between language, identity and legitimacy are frequently highlighted in current research (Norton 2003, 2006). Negotiation of identity, legitimacy, and membership is discursively mediated in institutional interactions (Pavlenko & Norton 2007). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) stress, learning through interaction depends on student's intentionality and agency. It is through intentional social interactions with members of the other culture, through continuous attempts to construct new meanings through new discourses that one

becomes an equal participant in new discursive spaces. Participation and engagement in institutional interactions is a critical avenue for learning (Lave & Wenger 1991).

At the same time, sociocultural approaches to L2 acquisition recognize that L2 learners are engaged in a dialogic relationship with society in which context is negotiated rather than presupposed, and in which speakers must continuously negotiate their identity positions relative to other speakers (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Bakhtin (1981) observed that who we are is not just what we tell others about us but also what others tell about us. He also explained, language is a "living, socio-ideological concrete thing" (p. 293) because, rather than finding its origin in dictionaries, it comes from situated human interactions: "All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts which it has lived its socially charged life" (p. 293). Therefore, the same person may not use the same dialogue in a different situation. One produces/reproduces different voices in different social interactions affording one multiple identities.

An intense sense of belonging to classroom community facilitates participation and engagement in classroom discourses and learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Membership in a community, therefore, demands that members construct, negotiate, and (re)negotiate new social identities which can enable them to be recognized as legitimate members within the community. In order to participate in a community of practice, ELLs may face the problem of not getting access to participate in a particular community, which again influences their construction of identity. Depending on their multiple levels of learning (i.e. fast or slow, motivated or non-motivated) they stay in the outer circle of that community or stay on the edge of the periphery of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Depending also on the surroundings and the resources available, to some communities their participation is full, to some peripheral (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, even if the opportunities do arise to the L2 learners in a classroom, they may find that there are particular social conditions under which they are most uncomfortable and unlikely to speak or write. This way, learners may again form several identities depending on their sense of belonging or not belonging to a community of practice. They

construct sometimes participant and sometimes non-participant learner identities. Thus, a multicultural classroom provides opportunities to learners to form multiple identities as L2 learners that may deteriorate their learning. It is ironic that ELLs are learning the language in order to belong to the community but the community in return may act as a barrier to their participation (Toohey, 2002).

2.4. Othering and Sense of Belonging and Integration of Muslim Learners at School

Citizens in multicultural contexts are familiar with terms like ‘migrant,’ ‘refugee’ and ‘minority’ groups to mark the Other (Pavlenko, 2001, 2006a, 2006b). Like ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee’, the label ‘Muslim’ imposes a social identity on the students. The students may use an array of communication/ participation strategies to resist the label and stereotyped features attached to it. They may seek to renegotiate legitimacy, membership, investment and participation to reposition themselves in classroom. Ryan and Viete (2009) identified ‘feelings of belonging’ to the academic institution and the academic community as major factors that facilitate student integration and learning. The discourses used in a community play a vital role in positioning a member in the community. Learners from non-mainstream often feel “excluded, ignored, isolated, marginalized, or simply distanced” (Ryan & Viete 2009, p. 309).

Thus, the notions of belonging and membership are informed, influenced, and further defined by conceptions of who does not belong, that is, exclusion or marginalization. "Us" gains definition and meaning in relation to how we conceive of and construct (discursively and materially) "them"; and membership is attained through the processes of exclusion and marginalization. Influenced by this “us”-versus - “them”, separatist approach to immigration and diversity has been influenced by attitudes and beliefs about other types of differences, including race and ethnicity (Pennycook, 1998). In this regard, the ‘Othering’ of Muslim immigrants creates tensions that tend to influence Muslim children's experiences in school in the U.S. (Liese, 2004 & Abu El-Haj, 2007 as cited in Tindongan, 2011).

The particular situations of Muslim immigrants and refugees living in Canada remain under researched and undertheorized in much research on sense of belonging, integration, and identity construction. Unlike some other faith groups, Muslims tend to highlight their religious identity (Brah, 1996; Jacobson, 1998; Modood, 2005; Shah, 2006 as cited in Shah, 2008), which can be problematic in a proclaimed secular context like Canada. Sometimes Muslims are considered as “outsiders” and “foreigners” if they maintain their religious identity (Hain, 2004 as cited in Shah, 2008). This implies that integration is possible “at the price of becoming less Muslim” (Smith, 2002, p.14) which is in a sense exclusionary. Therefore, how Muslims are doing in terms of their integration in a post-9/11 Western or Eurocentric country, is a subject to study.

2.5. Religious Identity Formation of Muslim Adolescents in Post 9/11Context

Adolescence is not naturally the only space and time when people are faced with the task of defining/choosing or becoming something. In fact, difficulties in adolescence may be socially constructed (Hebert, 2001). Adolescents are, as all people, engaged in constant processes of identity formation (Hebert, 1995; Pillion, 1995; Dyck and McLaren, 2002). In the realm of the socially constructed needs of adolescents, the search for acceptance is crucial. According to Hebert (2001) identity development of adolescents with stories of diaspora is made more complex as they “experience considerable conflict between the expectations of their cultural/racial group and the norms of the dominant society” (p.160). In this sense, Muslim learners in a non-Muslim country may experience difficulties in adjusting to a community of Canadian English speakers of which they may not acknowledge themselves (and be acknowledged) as full members.

Exploring how multiple identities are managed by Muslim adolescents and are perceived by others is crucial because as young first-generation immigrants their identities as Muslims Canadian students are sometimes in conflict. Projection of faith identity among Muslim youth signals a challenge to racism as Merry (2007) posits, “A strong sense of identity that has established roots and finds support in a much broader community ... can be a wonderful resource for combating prejudice, stereotyping and

maltreatment” (p. 97). The most common forms of identities that Muslim adolescents construct in a post 9/11 context in the West are categorised as hyphenated identity and double-consciousness identity (Young, 2010). Most of the time they go through three stages named as ascribed, chosen, and declared Muslim identity to form their Muslim Identity (Peek, 2005).

2.5.1. Hyphenated identity

The term Muslim-Canadian labels a person not only as a Canadian who happens to be Muslim, but also defines that person by religion rather than nationality, ethnicity, or any other way in which he or she wishes to be identified. Emphasizing of the Muslim part of a person's identity in a way that is not done for Christians or those of other religious faiths is problematic. Sirin and Fine (2007) depict Muslim American youth living hyphenated lives in post 9/11 context. Sirin and Fine describe these hyphenated identities as:

Untangling, creating, and recreating identities is a developmental task of adolescence in general, but for young Muslim adolescents living under a microscope in a highly charged political and religious environment tension and strife are often a daily part of life. As an element of life, schools are implicated and are relevant places to be examined for their complicity in reinforcing hegemonic cultural norms. (p.151)

2.5.2. Double-consciousness: Living in a liminal space

This is an experience in which one's self is coloured by the experience of his or her subordination. Young (2010) writes:

Double consciousness [sic] arises when the oppressed subject refuses to coincide with these devalued, objectified, stereotyped visions of him or herself. While the subject desires recognition as human - capable of activity, full of hope and possibility - she receives from the dominant culture only the judgement that she is different, marked or inferior. (p. 42)

The kind of identity influenced by double consciousness requires attending two worlds or living in between the two realities: liminal spaces. Liminal spaces are zones between two worlds or in the place where these two worlds overlap. These two worlds are home culture and the dominant society. Muslim students are living in the liminal space outside their homelands, and yet not quite at home in the country in which they live. They enter the Western world carrying the legacy of their country's often troubled relationship with Westerners and reside in liminal spaces. One of the liminal spaces Muslim students inhabit is public school. In school, they are adolescents like their classmates, but unlike their classmates they transit to an alternate cultural environment the moment they walk out of their parents' house. School is a nested environment within the dominant culture. Hence, students' transitions involve negotiating two dimensions of liminal spaces. School environments mirror the wider society, thus the lived experiences of Muslim immigrants in dominant society play out in classrooms and on playgrounds. Maintaining double consciousness means that an individual is unable to grow in, or into, his or her own identity in a way that allows that person to privilege his or her cultural roots.

2.5.3. Three stages of Muslim identity: Ascribed, chosen, and declared Muslim identity.

A Muslim learner's taking up of a hyphenated or double-consciousness identity is fluid in nature and shifts over time (Wenger, 1998). Peek (2005) mentioned three different forms of Muslim identity shaped at three different stages over time depending on the age, the length of time families have been in a Western country, and other factors:

During the first stage-religion as ascribed identity-religion was not a salient identity for the participants. It was either taken for granted as an aspect of their individual and social selves, or viewed as something to be denied. In the second stage-religion as chosen identity-participants consciously decided to embrace their Muslim identity, often after much self-reflection, with the support of their peers, and sometimes at the exclusion of other core identities such as ethnicity and nationality. The third stage-religion as declared identity-occurred following a crisis event,

September 11, 2001. Most of the participants [Muslims in the USA] decided it was vitally important to both strengthen and assert their identities at this time to retain a positive self-perception and correct public misconceptions. (p. 236)

2.6. Summary

Therefore, the theoretical concept of identity rejects the idea that individuals have a unique, fixed, and coherent identity, which suggests that identity is multiple, non-unitary, dynamic, and socially constructed. When multiple identities are shaped in many different contexts in which particular discourses are preferred, individuals reconstruct their selves in different ways. The present-day discourse around Islam and Muslims symbolize the hidden power relations that may silence and marginalize some learners. The suppression of voice of Muslim students as minority group may lead to an intense loss of self - esteem and identity. According to language socialization theory, it is a matter to observe through literature review (in Chapter 3) as to how L2 learners and Muslim learners identify themselves and try to position themselves in and through discourse.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

3.1. Overview

In this chapter, I present how language, religion (specifically Islam), and discourse around Islam may have impacts on Muslim L2 learners' identity construction. I also present some of the common features of identity as it is multiple, fluid, and shifts over time as well as it is socially constructed. The literature review draws from three bodies of work. The first body of literature deals with English Language learning as a means of integration and belonging based on sociocultural theories on identity that was discussed in Chapter 2. The second body of literature concerns Muslim L2 learners (adolescents) as problematic to social integration in the rise of Islamophobic discourses. The third body of literature involves multiple identity construction of Muslim adolescents.

3.2. Integration and Sense of Belonging of L2 Learners

It is often easy to overlook that ELLs straddle in two or more communities of practice and must negotiate various systems of beliefs that may not complement one another. This makes the situation difficult for the ELLs to integrate into the dominant society. How they try to manage "the complexities of belonging both 'here' and 'there' simultaneously" gives rise to "the vicissitudes of identity formation" (Suarez-Orozco 2001). For an instance, studies of ethnic minority African-American children show that the children were and still are often considered as obstacle to integrate with the dominant society. Bowl (2003) presents data that shows ethnic minority students as feeling 'silenced' and "alienated" from the institution and from other students. The study details how this happens with minority ethnic students'

own life experiences, including poverty and racism, were not thought suitable for discussion in the classroom ... because such discussion seemed unwelcome among middle class white students.... They [ethnic minority students] reported instances where discussion, particularly about racism,

were stifled by tactics of white course colleagues who would either refuse to participate, or deny the validity of the black students' experiences. (p. 88)

3.3. Integration Strategies of Muslim Students

The process of integration is further complicated by a combination of factors such as religion, [religious] identity along with school socialization norms. In contrast to the immigrants in the 1970s and 80s who sought more integration strategies with the dominant society, more recent immigrants are concerned that their children maintain their ethnic and religious/Muslim identities along with their Canadian identities (Smythe & Toohey, 2009). They employ a range of strategies to promote this, such as sending their kids to Arabic learning centers and keeping relationships with other Muslim families living in Canada or back home. However, the way Muslims are misunderstood in the West and the way they are more likely conceived of by the mainstream media as “foreigners” or “others” have created more difficulty for the Muslim population to be acculturated and/or integrated into the fabric of Canadian society (Tindongan, 2011). From that view point, I cannot be that hopeful about the prospect of Muslim students' integration whose religion is often considered as an alien in Western cultures, and therefore, in many liberal societies, Muslims have become “the critical case of multiculturalism” (Haque, 2010).

In a multicultural context, students both from majority and minority ethnic groups, often tend to socialize, sit and study with their ‘own’ ethnic groups. Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) suggest, cultural communities are socially constructed and based upon shared experiences. Many of the students seem to suggest a preference for being amongst “their own” group. (Housee, 2011, p.86). However, after the tragic events of 9/11, Muslim students prefer to be more “in group” since that allows them a sense of safety and empowerment. A participant in Shah's (2009) study also admits why he prefers to be with his Muslim friends:

When others make fun of you or pass comments-you know-it makes you feel an outsider. I have been born and brought up here [UK]. I used to have White friends but now all my friends are boys from our community. (p.529)

In relation to daily interactions with peers of dominant culture, some participants reported that the problems lay not so much in language itself but with culture. One of the problems of language socialization was the problem in selecting topics of conversations (Novera, 2004). She studied some Muslim Indonesian international students in an Australian context and confirmed that cultural differences caused adjustment problem. Lack of knowledge of “footy” (Australian football) could be a barrier to making friends: it forced the Indonesian Muslim students to be silent, inhibiting the flow of conversation. Another problem was the difference between Indonesian and Australian cultural values. As for example, Muslim students’ lack of shared alcohol culture made it difficult for them to mingle with their Australian counterparts. Therefore, along with the students’ difficulties with English, the culture of Muslims students contributed to the problem of socialization.

Rissanen et al. (2015) conducted an online survey on a large number of students on teachers’ attitudes to Muslim students and Muslim student integration. Their study reflects the general negativity towards Islam in Finland and indicates that Finnish teachers are still more willing to deal with forms of difference other than religious minorities and are prone to promoting uniformity rather than recognizing and appreciating diversity. They concluded that elementary and early education teachers had the most negative attitudes to Muslims and to their likelihood of integrating into the community.

3.4. Sense of Belonging of Muslim Students

Muslim students’ ongoing challenge of integration and belonging in general is added up to the challenge of securing a recognized “voice” in particular. For Muslims, the questions of language learning and identity formation, and the newly minoritized and racialized identities here in the Canadian context are exceedingly complicated. With issues of language and religion, international politics challenges their daily life with questions of belonging (Shah, 2008; Peek, 2005). Along with that, how to claim a voice that is heard, becomes salient and influential to Muslims—particularly in the realms of school, family, and community. Muslim students are Othered and marginalized by the West and held hostage to misunderstandings and eroticized impressions perpetuated by

Western media (Shah, 2009). Following 9/11, they have been irrevocably impacted by the reactions of the mainstream. This creates a problem for them because the events have changed the way they identify themselves and are identified by others. Therefore, Muslim students in today's Western world must negotiate multiple identities – even though they are the residents of a country in the West who function as fully as any citizen, they are perceived by others as threatening outsiders - some of which is expanded on in the following sections in reference to literature.

3.5. Identity Construction of Muslim Adolescents

In Sirin and Fine's (2007) study, Muslim adolescents admit that they are given the hyphenated identity for few reasons. Some of them found that even after their being born and brought up in Western countries they found that their friends point out to them that they do not belong "here"; rather, they are identified through their parents' ethnic identity and their religion. So, they are called, for example, "Pakistani-Muslim" or 'Pakistani-American-Muslim". Participants in Sirin and Fine's (2007) study experienced "out-group" identity from the mainstream society and contribute to "in-group" identity formations. Other literature emphasizes that Muslims are being driven into "Muslimness" as an alternate identity along with "hyphenated identity" because of experiences of alienation and marginalization in the wider society (Kepel, 2003; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004; Modood, 2004 as cited in Shah, 2008). Some preferred their Muslim identity to their ethnic identities. Yet another group found that their Muslim identity was at stake because of the events of 9/11, thus they opted to be in groups with other Muslims just to feel safe against being bullied or tormented. This encouraged Muslims to be in-group cohesion driving them towards a concept of "Muslimness" which appeared to offer a sense of security and belonging, in opposition to the feelings of insecurity and "otherness" (Shah, 2008). However, in some cases, such as in a Finnish majority classroom, instead of the teacher's intention to support the identity development of his students, "you as a Finn", "you as a Muslim", "you as a Finnish Muslim", the taking up of identity varies on personal choice (Rissanen, 2014, p. 133).

In researching the experience of Muslim students, Rissanen's study (2014) also relates to the post-structural concept of identity formation: shifting nature of identity. It is

important to avoid taken-for-granted assumptions about what being an ethnic minority means, or what cultural codes a religious identity may take: the religious identities are fluid and interchangeable, subject to negotiation and contestation. Stuart Hall (1998), a leading contributor to this debate, argues that ethnic identities are fluid and are always located in a given social context. Places shape how people experience being and belonging.

In the wake of 9/11, students who encounter disruptions in constructing Muslim identities, choose to manage the disruptions and form identities accordingly. In this regard, Giroir (2014) studied two Muslim students in the USA who constructed a sense of autonomy in managing their Muslim identities that were contested. Knowing that post 9/11 discourses in the media position Muslims negatively, after his arrival in the USA, one of the participants shaved his beard—a marker of his cultural and ethnic background. By doing so he compromised his “ascribed Muslim identity” because he wanted to participate and belong to the social world of his peers, showing independence and openness to new social and cultural groups. Like many Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, the other participant was compelled to answer for actions for which he was not responsible (i.e. racialized discourses about Osama bin Laden, and so on). He was visited and interviewed by the dad of his white male friend and then was permitted to continue his friendship with his son. Though the two boys ended up forming Muslim identities as “chosen identities”, their notions of inclusion and belonging were negatively affected by the marginalizing discourse of the Western media - their desire to “belong to” was met with experiences of rejection (Giroir, 2004).

The young British Muslim participants in Shah’s (2008) study persist in projecting their “chosen Muslim identity” despite having difficult experiences—hostile experiences of Islamophobia, media, and masses. For example, they lose white friends, are bullied because of wearing hijab, are tormented or teased as “terrorists” or “Bin Laden”. They mostly feel like they do not belong to the country just because of their Muslim identity, though these events are ignored by educators:

I'm the only Asian teacher at my school. During the war in Iraq a pupil who's also Asian told me that she was being teased by other pupils. 'We killed hundreds of your lot yesterday ... Saddam's your dad, ... we're getting our

revenge for what you Pakis did to us on 11 September ... T asked her if she had told her class teacher. Yes, she had told her teacher, and her teacher had said: 'Never mind, it's not serious. It'll soon pass. You'll have to expect a bit of teasing at a time like this. (Richardson & Wood, 2004 as cited in Shah, 2009, p. 64)

Thus, Muslim adolescents struggle to embody the multiple identities associated with religion. Such identifications at times comeingle and at other times clash with the dominant culture. Negotiating multiple identities may create tensions reflecting the inner turmoil associated with questions about who one is as a learner. The complicated, shifting, and often troubled relationship Islam has had with the West may continue reflecting and impacting on the identity formation of Muslim learners and their learning.

3.6. Summary

In sum, Chapter 3 is a review of the literature containing some theories and results related to my research questions. In the next chapter I draw on the relevant literature to make sense of my adolescent daughter's experience in the Canadian public-school context. My objective of drawing on different stages of Muslim identity construction is to see how as teachers, educators, and/or parents we can assist Muslim learners to make the shifts in their identity smoother, acknowledge their various identities, and ensure a safer environment for them to participate. I also believe, it is important for teachers to be knowledgeable about practices of Muslim learners in multiple communities who construct their multiple identities, which may impact their learners' identities and their learning. This in return will be relevant for engaging with diversity, and to inform practice to contribute towards a multicultural community that is sensitive to ethnic difference. The underpinning is to incorporate a respect for persons as individuals and for the collectives that people have a sense of belonging to (Modood, 2004). However, the failure of the literature to take into account Muslim L2 learner identity in Canada has inspired my study. The aim of my study is to see (in Chapter 4) what happens to a Muslim student who may be trying to overcome her L2 identity and struggle to construct a positive Muslim identity. Can she be able to resist a suppression of voice,

marginalization, and move forward from being 'Other' towards being a successful, recognized member of the classroom community by overcoming stereotyped identity?

Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Critical Reflection

4.1. Overview

As stated in the earlier chapter (Literature Review), the present work rejects an understanding of identity as something fixed and immutable. Instead, the adolescent in this study, is constantly engaged in the construction (and reconstruction) of her identities. In this chapter, I discuss my daughter, Sarah's, experiences growing up in a Muslim family and my perception of her challenges in a non-Muslim Canadian public- school classroom. I have noticed that there is a significant difference between her Muslim identity at home and at school. My perception of her experience is magnified in the wake of 9/11, the context Sarah responded to, sometimes resisted her opportunities to express opinion and thereby constructed her learner identity in classroom. I focus specifically on Sarah's experiences with learning English in the classroom among other non-Muslim Canadians. I have documented my perceptions of her experiences in the classroom through critical reflection and I use these reflections to address the research questions as written in Section 1.5. Prior to the reflection, I briefly discuss my methodology, critical reflection as my approach to data analysis.

4.2. Methodological Framework:

Since this study deals with the uniqueness of the ways an adolescent Muslim learner articulates her identities, employing a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis is pivotal. Qualitative methods are used when there is a need for attention and depth of analysis that cannot be achieved by quantitative means. The experiences and positions of the researchers have particular implications in qualitative analysis. A common application of qualitative research involves the exploration and uncovering of "phenomena about which little is yet known" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 19). Identity work amongst minority Muslim language learners represents this kind of phenomena that needs attention. In an attempt to do so, I have taken into account Dewey's (1910) reflective thinking.

4.2.1. Reason for Choosing Critical Reflection

Dewey (1910) states that our thoughts sometimes lead to a belief, such as through the process of thinking we believe something. This type of thinking is what he called reflective thinking, thinking that relates to belief which is grounded by something already examined. For Dewey, to reflect means to find proof and other sources that help to bring about suggestions for further thought or actions, or to challenge the suggested belief; as he asserts, reflective thought is “Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions ---.” (p.5). He illustrates the act of reflective thinking in terms of what might happen when someone faces a fork in the road where s/he cannot decide which way to turn. S/he should find evidence to support her/his decision.

There are two elements involved in reflective thinking: “(a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief” (p.12). The state of perplexity, hesitation, and doubt appears when we are faced by unexpected occurrences or circumstances which leads to confusion and suspends our belief. This confusion urges our thought to find solutions, determined by the process of reflection. As he posits, “demands for the solution of perplexity is the steadying and guiding factor in the entire process of reflection” (p.9). The second element of reflective thinking, the act of searching and investigating, is the core of the reflective thinking itself. One should search data from memory, past knowledge and experience, or new data or knowledge. The inquiry process involves forward and backward thinking.

4.2.2. Telling Stories to Reflect on My Experience and perception

During my inquiry process, I took story telling as my tool. We live in the world of story, when we meet somebody we share or discuss our story of something. Historically, human stories played a significant role in humans’ lives before written words existed. These stories, the human’s lived stories were told from generation to generation for young to learn about their culture and values. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) feel that our lives are shaped by story as they assert that “people shape their daily lives by stories of

who they are and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories” (p. 477). Personally, I believe that telling stories is important as stories may give us understanding of an individual’s life and they may attract others as well since “Man is essentially a story-telling animal” (McIntyre, in Butler & Bentley, 1987, p.5). Since we are capable of speaking, we tell stories, stories about our experience or our perception about the world around us. We all tell stories to give meanings to our lives. When we tell our personal stories, our thoughts work to make sense of the events or perceptions and the influence of these in our lives.

My daughter’s experiences prompted me to find new understandings about my presumed Muslim identity and reconstructing my taken for granted self as a Muslim mom. Therefore, I chose to retrospectively reflect on Sarah’s experiences as a learner of Muslim cultural background at school since I figured it could work as reconstructing that experience in an attempt to find solutions (Dewey, 1910). I used critical reflection since that enabled me to challenge the validity of my presuppositions about my daughter’s learner identity as a Muslim and assess the appropriateness of our knowledge, understanding and beliefs given our present contexts. Therefore, following Dewey (1910), the steps I have undertaken are:

1. Identifying the assumptions/ taken-for-granted ideas/common sense beliefs:
2. Assessing and scrutinizing the validity of those assumptions in term of how they relate to our “real-life” experiences
3. Transforming those assumptions to become more inclusive and integrative, and using this newly formed knowledge to more appropriately inform our future actions and practices

4.2.3. Choosing the Topic and Keeping Journal

After finishing my coursework for an MA at Simon Fraser University, while my friends were way ahead than me in selecting topics for their theses, I was still having difficulty finding the topic for mine. My inner self was thinking of writing about a pivotal moment that happened at Sarah’s grade six classroom. However, I was not sure if I could

use my daughter's experience as my research topic since talking about religion is not very common in the Canadian context. I was feeling uncomfortable to undertake the attempt of writing about the topic also because it highlights my assumptions, views and behaviours. I talked to my supervisor, Dr. Allan MacKinnon, Associate Professor, Simon Fraser University, who listened to me very attentively and recommended I read the book "Peripheral Visions: Learning along the Way" written by Mary Catherine Bateson (1994). He asked me to journal my daughter's experience and my feelings about it. I started keeping journal. I recollected some of her other elementary experiences that are correlated to the pivotal event. I recalled some of my experiences raising her as a Muslim mom and articulated them with the intention of analyzing how those reflect to her experience as a Muslim learner. I looked back and reflected on her experiences with mine and explored some of my personal experience as well. I journaled the description of my conversation between Sarah and I, noted down our feelings and emotions associated with our experiences, and journaled other related experiences that happened along the way until writing this paper. However, due to ethical reason, I did not present any interview of my daughter, nor did I quote any speech from her or other associated people in this study. Below is the brief explanation of my ethics consideration taken from the Office of Research Ethics (ORE), Simon Fraser University.

4.2.4. Ethics Consideration

Autobiography is when a researcher retrospectively and selectively writes about his or her past experiences (<http://www.sfu.ca/content/sfu/ore.html>). Auto-ethnography, on the other hand, is an approach to research and writing that seeks to systematically explore the researcher's subjective experience and connects it to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings (Taken from the same website as above.). Although some forms of auto-ethnography involve retrospective reflection, others may involve a process in which the researcher places him/herself in a particular research context in order to prospectively analyze his/her experiences. Both of these methods involve possible problems associated with obtaining the initial and continuing consent of individuals mentioned in the narrative. If there are no other people interviewed

or named (or whose identities can be otherwise ascertained) in the narrative, and it draws purely on retrospective reflection, ethical review is not required.

4.2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

After the reflective form of writing for a year in my journal, I reflected critically, which worked as a connector between the past experiences and future action. Some of the experiences that Sarah encountered resemble my own as a Muslim. I consider myself as personally aware of the struggle she is having, while I strive to keep my identity as a Muslim. While I understand the position from which I speak, I do not claim an insider's perspective. I position myself as intrinsically engaged with the themes explored in this study and empathize with the struggles of my daughter. Aware of my own identity as a Bangladeshi-Canadian-Muslim-educator, I was somewhat aware of the complexities of the hyphenated identities of my daughter. The sections below are about my perception and my experiences about Sarah. [The italicized words or phrases are from my critical reflections.]

4.3. Sarah's Background (in brief)

Sarah is our first daughter born in Saudi Arabia while my husband and I moved from Bangladesh to work as faculty in a public university. She grew up with a lot of care from her parents and her grandmother at home till age five. She did not have any pre-schooling because of its unavailability in English medium in the city we were living at that time. However, she was home-schooled by my husband and me. She was exposed to TV programs (e.g. rhymes, cartoons, movies) mostly in English from her birth onward. Her social life was limited to playing with children of our Bangladeshi friends, children of our colleagues coming from different parts of the world, and sometimes children of our local Saudi neighbours. From as early as two years old she was well conversed both in Bengali and English. She was able to communicate in Arabic with her friends to some extent as well. Culturally, Sarah was exposed to mostly Muslim cultures at home and outside during her five-year stay in Saudi Arabia.

Sarah moved to Canada with us at age five and started her kindergarten [KG] in a Canadian elementary school. From KG onward, she did not have to take any ESL classes; she was put in the mainstream classroom. Because of her extrovert nature, she was able to make many friends. She invited and was invited to play-dates and birthday parties of children from all cultures. She was the most cooperative, friendly, helpful student that a teacher could expect in their class. These were the comments by her class teachers during our oral communication or written communications in report cards. She was involved in as many clubs as her school or after school programs offered. She was given citizenship certificates/awards from her classes because of involvement and showing excellence in her school community activities. She had also proved academic excellence at her classes in spoken or written communications. Public speaking and leadership are two of the skills that she personally as well as her teachers adored most in her.

4.4. Sarah’s Exposure to Islamic Culture and her Muslim Identity Construction at a School Canadian Public School

From my regular conversation with Sarah and her class works that were returned home during the school year, I found that she had never talked or written about the Muslim cultural events. It is important to note that after our arrival in Canada, we did not celebrate our cultural festivals as much as we started celebrating the mainstream festivals like Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas with our new Canadian friends at their home or at Sarah’s school. We did not celebrate the Canadian festivities at home; neither did we celebrate our own cultural festivals especially the Eids (Religious festivals for Muslims: one is celebrated after a month’s of fasting in the Arabic month of Ramadan and the other one is celebrated following the ‘Hajj’- Muslim pilgrimage). Following the lunar calendar, the two Eids may occur any days during the week or weekends of the year. In that case, since many often the dates are uncertain, we could not take days off from work or school. In addition, since we did not have many acquaintances celebrating Eids, the first couple of years we hardly celebrated them with our friends; rather, we just celebrated them as family events. Therefore, whenever Sarah was asked to talk or write about any cultural events, she used to write about how we celebrated the mainstream ones not our religious ones. However, it never came to my mind that she felt “*ashamed*” about her religion so

she did not mention it. Previously, on occasion if anybody mentioned anything that was related to her religion she used to be very proud. For example, during the study of child labour, her class read a story about a Pakistani Muslim boy who was a child labourer in his country. In that story, the boy mentioned about Eid and other Muslim cultures and Sarah felt very proud that her class was learning about her culture. A similar thing happened when they were studying about Malala, a Pakistani activist for female education. She was proud to know that a girl from Muslim background became a world-renowned person now.

4.5. Sarah's Religious Education and her Religious Identity Formation in the Home

My husband and I are from practicing Muslim families, and we try to follow our religion in a moderate way. Both of us pray five times a day (one of the fundamental pillars of Islam) at home, fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan (another fundamental pillar of Islam), and abstain from religiously prohibited activities (such as drinking alcohol or eating pork). I dress modestly and wear a hijab though during my first two years in Canada, I had to take off my hijab because of the fear that I might face harassment from people of other religious groups. My husband does not bear any religious look like having beard or wearing any Muslim clothing; rather, he wears western clothes. However, as primary caregivers to Sarah, both of us have secular mentality like giving her religious teachings at home moderately without forcing her to do anything religious. Being born and raised in a Muslim family, Sarah respects most of the religious activities and has started to follow some of them. As an adolescent, she likes to wear modest clothes of her own choice although she does not wear hijab which is obligatory on Muslims girls from their adolescent age. At school and elsewhere she made sure that she does not eat any pork product. I taught her how to pray and she does that frequently. It satisfied us to know that she is at least trying to follow some of the Muslim culture even living in a non-Muslim country, which is very challenging for many adults let alone young people.

I still remember how proud she also used to feel just after our arrival in Canada. Every time she used to see a Muslim woman wearing hijab passing by us, she used to

index and whispered at my ears with enthusiasm that *there was another Muslim like me*; however, I had to stop her doing that saying it was not good manners to point at others and talk about their religious identity in public. Additionally, at the back of my mind I also did not want to be identified as Muslim because of the negative image of Muslims in the Western society. When I did that, I did not assume that it would impact Sarah as to who she is as a Muslim and how she might react from her watchful observation of the people around her (Bateson, 1994) in her later life.

Because of the fear of the negative image of Muslims in the West and the western media, along with the young age of Sarah, I did not allow her to watch/listen to any news on TV or radio, and search internet until age 11. She was only allowed to watch cartoons or movies with or without parents that were suitable for her age. She was allowed to borrow and read any books suitable for her age from the school or community library. Under these circumstances, she was ignorant of the world as well as the Muslim world presented on media (TV, radio, internet, or newspaper). She did not know about 9/11 or the negative image of Muslims in the West, not even from family members. However, I can assume that from my wearing hijab before landing to Canada, leaving it during our first two years here, and wearing it again, as well as from other incidents she could guess that she is from a religious minority that has many differences with the dominant Western culture.

During that age, she was given religious education only at home by me unlike some of our friend's children who used to go to the Islamic education center on the weekends. There they learn the Arabic language to recite "Al-Quran" the Holy Book of Muslims, "Hadith" (the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic history. At the beginning, we were not motivated to send her to weekend Islamic education center since we were thinking that living in a secular country like Canada, she should just learn about basic of religion from home. Moreover, at the back of our mind, there was a fear that since Islam and Muslims are under surveillance after 9/11, it is better to practice the religion at home.

As parents, we did all these activities such as: teaching her religion at home not even from a formal education center; keeping religion and religious identity private; celebrating Islamic cultural events as much as possible at home and mainstream cultural

events with her school and family friends; keeping her away from any negative images of Muslims and the Muslim world outside Canada to make it easy for Sarah to integrate with her mainstream classmates. Until the occurrence of a pivotal moment, we did not assume that these teachings will impact on her construction of negative Muslim identity and her learning at school (Wenger, 1998). We also did not think of educating her about 9/11 thinking that it was too early for her to be exposed to it. Moreover, at the back of my mind, I had had my own discomfort involved around the incident of 9/11 since arriving in the West, a new place with different discourses around it. I was worried about how or what point of view I should take.

4.6. The Pivotal Moment: Making Meaning from Being a Muslim Mother to a Stigmatized Muslim Child

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction (See “My Personal Interest in the Study” section), my husband, our two children, and I immigrated to Canada in 2009 leaving behind all our friends and family in Bangladesh (located in the South-East of Asia). Sarah is our older child who started kindergarten at age five in September 2009 in a Canadian public school. Her school consists of about 95% Caucasian/ white Canadian teachers and staff, 5% from other ethnicities but citizens of Canada; whereas, 70% of the student population is Caucasian Canadian and 30% are immigrants or citizens mostly coming from Asia, Europe, and Africa. The majority of the students are either Christians or non-religious affiliated and 2% are Muslim. (This statistic is approximate and came from my various experiences at school assemblies and other programs at her class and school). Even though Sarah is a student from minority religious background, she is usually a very active participant in her class. My everyday interaction with her, my meetings with her class teachers, and her report cards are evidence of that.

However, during a particular discussion on 9/11, Sarah was uncomfortable and completely unresponsive, though she knows the answers to some questions her teacher asked. Completely unresponsive. For example, while the teacher was unfolding the story of the “Twin Tower attack” even while the teacher was asking some clarification questions like, “Who are Muslims?” and “What is the meaning of terrorist?”, Sarah did not take part nor did she add up anything to the topic. Sarah’s not taking part in the

discussion may be attributed to her lack of knowledge of the contemporary world. Since she did not have any previous knowledge about the incident, the fact that she did not participate could be considered normal, though she knew some of the terms (e.g. “Muslims”). She did not even raise hand to respond or to ask for any clarification question which was her usual practice.

As soon as Sarah came back home after school, she looked very anxious. With a mixture of emotional burst of sadness and anger she asked me if I know about 9/11; if so why I hadn't informed her about it earlier. Looking at her “helpless face and eyes” that were “blaming” me for keeping her ignorant about the 9/11 incident. It looked like she blamed me for not making her take part in class discussion because I did not give her the knowledge about it. Though she was blaming me, I gave her a hug so that she feels the assurance that it's ok not being able to participate in a class. Under the surface, I had the feeling that she might have been embarrassed as well for being a Muslim. I assured her I would tell the story once she cooled down.

With her first exposure to the “9/11” incident from her classroom, when Sarah came to me to learn more about it, I asked her how much she and her classmates knew about it. She told me that a few of her classmates who are allowed to watch news or who usually had more knowledge about the contemporary world, contributed mostly, whereas, she did not contribute anything at all. She also admitted that after reading the comprehension section that was followed by the discussion, she did not give any of her own opinions because she did not want to let her teacher and her peers know that she is from Muslim background.

I speculate, she knew in Canada, religious beliefs are typically considered private, therefore it was easy for her to disregard or hide her religious identity. However, she knew that some of her friends and peers might know about her Muslim identity seeing me with “hijab” while volunteering at her class before or picking her up after school. If she had participated or gave her own opinion, they might be confirmed about her Muslim identity. So, she “backed off” by not participating, keeping her feelings and opinions “inside”/” internal”.

In this context, keeping in mind the young age of Sarah as well as our living in a post 9/11 western world, I described to Sarah the tragic event of 9/11 in a simplistic way: when the tragic event happened, how tragic it was, who contributed to it and little bit of why and how the attack happened as much as my knowledge permitted. I told her a brief history about the “terrorist” who should be considered as “Bad Muslims” who killed so many innocent people. I told her that there were bad relationships between different countries and religions around the world since the beginning of civilization like the WW1 and WW2 and so on. From the historical perspective, there are some Muslims who want to “take revenge” on Americans because the American government had done something wrong to them. Instead of going in detail, I assured her that I would tell her all the stories once I learn more from books and once she grows older.

In order to have her not feeling bad about being a Muslim, I also told her that even though those people were taking revenge on the American government, they did not have any Islamic right to kill innocent people. In order to signify the heinous act the terrorist had committed, I gave her the reference from the Hadith, where it is said if one kills any innocent person s/he kills the whole community. If they follow their religion truly, they should not do any bad things because doing bad things are forbidden in every religion. I added:

There are both good and bad people in every country, in every religion. There are some Muslims who are “Bad Muslims”. They do bad things, kill others, and they are terrorists because they attacked the twin towers in America. They killed thousands of innocent people. As a “Good Muslim” you are not supposed to kill any innocent people.

In the meantime, I also wanted her to be knowledgeable about discourse of the Western media so that before taking everything blindfolded, she judges with her own perception. I told her that there are bad people everywhere around the world regardless of their religion. However, if bad people kill someone they should not be labelled by their religious identity as Muslims or Christians, they should be called bad people because no religion allows anybody to do any bad things. I also told her that if any criminal attacks somebody or some place, they are not labeled as other religious names but only “Muslims”. Media sometimes stereotypes Muslims by presenting, “All Muslims are

terrorists” (CISS, 2017). During our conversation, Sarah looked like someone who had been “*stigmatized*” than to be “*proud*” about her Muslim identity (*Stigmatized* and *proud* are my perceptions about Sarah’s feelings that are discussed in Chapter 4).

After our conversation on the event of 9/11, I was hoping that instead of taking the mainstream discourse as granted, Sarah’s response would have been different next time. With the interaction of her peers, she would give her own voice - voice that has never been uttered before (Bakhtin, 1981). I suggested Sarah give her own opinion what she thinks now about Muslims and about her identity as being a Muslim next time if she is in a class discussion or in her writing. I also told her to mention to her class that all Muslims are not terrorists only the “Bad Muslims” are. I also asked her if she wanted me talk to her teacher about it. Since she told me not to I paid respect to her opinion and did not do that; however, I advised her to talk to her teacher individually about how she felt about the class activity that day. I asked her to do so because I know she used to have a good relationship with her teacher who was ready to learn about any concerns about the students. I followed it up next few days if there was any conversation between her and her teacher or among her peers regarding the reading passage or if she had discussed anything with her teacher individually. When she got back to her classwork on the comprehension passage, I asked her if she had any chat with her teacher regarding her not giving her own opinion. She was just staring at me “*helplessly*”: I was able to read her face that was kind of asking me, “*What to say and how*”- (my assumption).

I was hoping that she should form strong positive Muslim identity; however, the situation got worse. It happened during the month of Ramadan (Holy month of fasting for Muslims: from sun rise to sun set which that year happened in June during school time. I also wanted to inform her teacher over a note or email about that but she pushed me not to do that. To my surprise, she was able to fast; however, to my query about what she does during lunch or snack break she answered me she did not tell her friends about her fasting. She told them that she was not eating because she was not hungry. I said to her:

If you say you are not hungry while actually you are; because I know how one feels like without food or a sip of water during the month of fasting in summer in Canada, then you’re lying. You should not lie as a Muslim. It is forbidden in our

religion. What is wrong? What will happen if you tell your teacher and friends that you are fasting?

However, she continued on saying that she was not hungry. Even after my push to tell her teachers and friends about her fasting, she did not open up. However, I remember she started fasting few days as trial during the month of Ramadan at age 11 motivated by seeing us, even after her dad's restriction of not fasting at that early age. We talked often with her to ensure that we were not pushing fasting onto her. She ensured us that she felt proud to be able to fast along with many other Muslims in Canada and around the world. She proudly talked about that to her grandparents and cousins over phone conversation. Sarah's contradictory behaviour at home and at school being a Muslim, made me reflect on the pivotal moment that I will critically analyze in the next section. Figure 1 shows my attempt to illustrate my discussion points from this section.

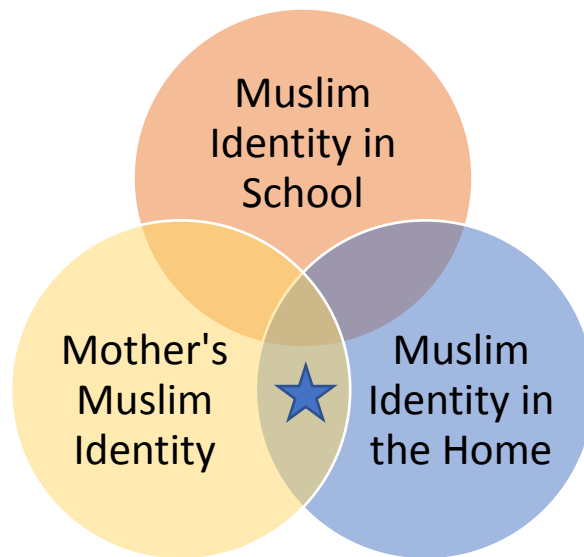


Figure 1. A schematic representation of Sarah's Muslim's identities with my identity as a mother. The star represents a liminal space of inter relational dynamics between her learner identities. Liminal spaces are discussed in Chapter 4 in 4.1.3 (Sarah's Living in a Liminal Space Section.)

4.7. Critical Reflective Analysis

4.7.1. Sarah's non-participant learner identity in the classroom.

When Sarah and I were having our first conversation about 9/11, she informed me that she did not take part in the discussion as well as in the writing. In theory, all students have the right to express themselves in the classroom; however, students who do not share the same cultural background as Sarah, in this case a Muslim L2 learner and her peers of the target language culture, may not have equal access to participation (Block, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2011), even though she had the willingness to participate. At first, she was “*blaming*” me for not informing her about the 9/11 incident and it looked like because of her lack of knowledge she could not take part. As parents, we always expect that she should participate in classroom; therefore, it was easy for her to put the blame on us since as Muslim parents we should have informed her about the incident that was planned by some Muslims. Or, we should have let her watch news from mainstream media (TV, newspapers, radio) so that she could at least be on the same boat with her peers. In such a context, Sarah took a quieter role giving in to the authority of her teacher and the other members in the class community. Probably those classmates had better knowledge than her so she gave her opportunity away to them. Having said that, I now regretted for not giving her the knowledge about the 9/11 incident and the contribution of the “*Bad Muslims*” to it. However, irony lies here in the fact when I discovered later in our conversation that, when she realized that this incident impacted her religion negatively, she felt “*uncomfortable*” and remained “*unresponsive*”. She kind of “*backed off*”. These phrases reflect my perception of Sarah's response; however, these are informative and offer a starting point for new understanding of lack of knowledge and lack of willingness to participate.

Now that I am retrospectively reflecting, I realize, Sarah's non-participation may also resonate to the fact that knowing too much would be a betrayal of her sense of self and of her community (Wenger, 1998). She might have thought that her perception as a “Muslim” may be a perceived threat by the wider society, which may pose challenges to her participation in school life. With so much criticism in the media, ordinary conversation about ‘Islam and terrorism’, and wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria she

thought that sharing her own knowledge or giving opinion might put her outside the classroom community. Thus, she remained a non-participant by giving away association with her Muslim community. Therefore, even when opportunities did arise, she found that there were particular social conditions under which she was most uncomfortable and unlikely to speak (Norton, 2014). Her inability to speak may reflect her identity as an L2 (English Language) Learner and may also have negatively impacted her opportunities for language development.

4.7.2. Sarah's L2 (English Language) learner identity.

As previously mentioned, before migrating to Canada at the age of five Sarah was well versed in English. Upon our arrival in Canada, Sarah was assessed and was assigned to regular classroom as soon as she started KG unlike some of her peers coming from other non-English speaking countries who had to take ESL classes. She personally felt proud about it, and she felt proud when she used to help her new classmates coming from other countries. Moreover, at home, she used English as a main means of communication with us (parents and her sister). She was more exposed to English language at home and at school; she used to watch programs on TV with parents and by herself, mostly in English; she joined more gatherings of multicultural people than those of her parents' own culture and language (which is Bengali). Socialization in English and her social skill were never questioned by her teachers and peers. Getting "A's" and "Exceeding Expectations" in the English Language as well as her teachers' comments on her social skills in her school report cards demonstrated that. Therefore, we as parents and Sarah as learner never thought of English as her L2 and her identity as L2 identity from KG onward. During my conversation about 9/11 with Sarah, both of us used English. A few days later, when I had followed up with Sarah if she had discussed it with her teacher and when I had assumed that she was reflecting on "*What to say and how?*" also gives rise to the question about Sarah's identity as a proficient English language learner identity. Now after the reflection, I assume, since English language serves as her mediator for her Muslim cultures and values to communicate in her class she might have meant that she did not know the appropriate/functional language to respond to her peers and teachers in

the target language. At the same time, since her teacher and her peers used the dominant discourse – the negative message about Muslims, she had to do the same thing that she might not want to do. She did not know “*how*” respond to or challenge to Islamophobic discourse if any arose, so, she remained a non-participant (discussed in detail in Chapter 5.6 Sarah’s Non- Participant Learner Identity Section). On top of all the aforementioned reasons for Sarah not participating in her classroom, Sarah might have felt stigmatized because of the discourse around her religion that made her non-participant as well.

4.7.3. Sarah’s negative and hidden Muslim identity.

From her peers’ participation in the class discussion and the quick skimming of the passage that the teacher handed out, Sarah got the idea that the passage gave negative impressions about Muslims. From the passage, she became certain that Muslims are stereotyped as “terrorists”. The negative image of Muslims fueled shame and embarrassment about Sarah’s faith and forced her to keep her beliefs and practices secret. She had the fear that her response might show her connection to the global imagined community of “Muslim Terrorists”. Therefore, during the class discussion and in her writing work she did not add anything onto the class discussion or in the written part because she did not want to show the class her perspective.

Sarah had felt “ashamed”/ “stigmatized” during the class discussion; therefore, did not disclose her Muslim identity rather tried to hide it from others. She said she was trying to “act normal outside” but inside she was concealing herself from her classroom community. She did not let her class know that she was from the “same religion”.

Zaib, a participant in Norton and Kamal’s (2003) study suggests, “A society is nothing but our attitude toward each other” (p. 301). If Sarah found that one or two of her peers are responding differently, she might have formed her Muslim identity differently. Moreover, now that I am reflecting back, Sarah’s question, “Why didn’t you tell me the story earlier, then I should have told my teacher?” may also indicate that if she knew it earlier, if I had told her earlier how to respond or talk like in the rise of 9/11 topic in class, she might have constructed her identity differently, maybe positively.

Now that I have learned about constructing identity and its impact on learning (see Chapter 2: Identity and Learning Section), I have realized that Sarah's interaction with her peers and her teachers and her hidden/negative Muslim identity may impact her learning and learner identity. During my journal entry Sarah had mentioned that her teachers and classmates never asked her about her religion; therefore, they might be unaware, or they might be hiding that they knew it, or they might not care about that at all. However, if her teachers and peers are ignorant about her identity that she wants to be self-identified with, it will be difficult for them to help one another. Moreover, negative classroom experience as well as Sarah's non-engagement/non-participation may impact her learning in a negative way as well (Housee, 2011). Therefore, the situation had a two-faced indication. For example, if Sarah's teachers and peers were aware of Sarah's Muslim identity, she might have been supported by them or she might have been rejected by them. This pressure of "to belong or not to belong" might be damaging her engagement and achievement at school.

I remember two incidents during my journal keeping. One day, she came home so happily that I thought she got her math test back with good marks (usually she is very excited on those days). She told me that she is so excited to have a Muslim lunch-monitor/supervisor wearing hijab at her school. Another time during Canada's accepting of Syrian refugees, she came back from school and eagerly called my cell phone since I was not home to give me the news that a Syrian refugee family is welcomed at her school. This might have been possible because of the positive attitude of welcoming Syrian refugees to the Canadian society. I assume that these additional Muslims are adding onto the Muslim population at her school community which may impact her construction of Muslim identity in a positive way.

4.7.4. Sarah's sense of social belonging in the school.

Sarah's feeling of stigmatization may also be combined with the pressure that she is from a minority/different religious group and therefore, her fear of non-integration/not belonging to her dominant classroom community. She took the discourse of the mainstream as superior to hers. The identity that she appropriated clearly demonstrates

that she was trying on the language of “others”, to “taste” her identity from the perspective of others (Bakhtin, 1981). Furthermore, Bakhtin as cited in Aukrust (2001), reported that dialogism is a mode of meaning-making characterized by the meeting and interaction of diverse and often dissenting social voices and perspectives.

Speakers always engage in a sort of dialogic negotiation with the listeners and accordingly take a stance of their identity. Therefore, Sarah negotiates dialogically with her classroom community by her non-participation with the rest and by showing her non-association with her Muslim community. Sarah’s identity is maintained in relation to the teacher and the peers of the dominant culture (Erickson, 1987). Therefore, she did not give her opinions in the discussion nor in her writing. She also did not allow me to talk to her teachers regarding her feelings about her being a Muslim. The way she behaved: perceived and responded was possible because of the available dominant discourse/narratives about Islam and Muslims as she disclosed to me that:

They’re (her friends who took part in class discussion on the negative image of Muslims) right, Sarah thought; so, she didn’t want to prove wrong. She didn’t want to make a fuss of her religion and lose her friends.

From my own experience as a mom and a volunteer in Sarah’s elementary classrooms, I have noticed how “left out” and “alienated” the invisible minority kids are, who don’t have their ethnic group to belong to (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Shah, 2009, Housee, 2011). Therefore, Sarah too was probably aware of the invisible pressure to integrate into “Canadian” values and norms: she did not want to be left out by losing her friends. She was also making sure that her teacher could not see her uncomfortableness. She ensured me that she did not take part in the conversation; however, there were other students too who never did take part. Thus, Sarah tried to accommodate to that particular classroom situation with her existing experience. The pressure of integration might be impacted somewhat, by the environment in which Sarah is being raised (Peek, 2005) at home.

Sarah is raised in a Christian dominated society and in a secular Muslim family. She had not seen us as her family celebrating Muslim cultural events (the two Eids) as much as we had celebrated the mainstream ones. Thus, I have found various explanations behind Sarah’s not mentioning about her religious festivals at school since she had more knowledge to talk or write about the mainstream cultural events than her own ones. The

other reason might be, since the two kinds of cultural events (mainstream and her own cultural ones) do not occur simultaneously but at two different timings, it was not possible as a child to remember and write about them during the celebrations of the mainstream ones. However, to my surprise, when I asked her once (probably when she was in grade 3 or 4) about the reason of not writing about her culture, she gave me her own reasons. She did so because she was simply following the instruction of her teachers. She also told me that she did not want to talk or write about something that her classmates and teachers are completely unaware of.

Reflecting back to the moments I assume integration into the mainstream culture was the most obvious choice for Sarah. Before and after any mainstream cultural events, teachers use worksheet materials on them and do activities about their plans and celebrations regarding them. So, Sarah wanted to belong to her classroom community by joining in the activities along with her peers. Though the mainstream celebrations may look secular and popular, many Muslims and people of other religious faith groups seem to reject or decline to participate in them for religious reasons. This indicates the privilege of dominant religious group through school materials and celebrating federal holidays (Schlosser, 2003 as cited in Abo-Zena, 2012). Sarah had been participating in the mainstream cultural events at school and sometimes even at home like “Halloween” and “Easter Egg Hunt” since her kindergarten until grade seven sometimes by “*ignoring*” and by “*hiding*” her Islamic cultures (this is discussed in the Data Analysis Section). However, at that time I did not worry much about that because I found that Sarah’s social, psychological, and academic growth were up to the level of her class. It did not take long for Sarah to assimilate in the school culture: as a very friendly and extroverted child with her English language skills from Kindergarten onward. My regular follow up with her teachers, my own experience as a volunteer at her class and school at several occasions apart from her report cards prove that. Moreover, as parents we did not bother about that too as we were thinking she was too young to learn all about religion and religious identity. Now that I have learnt about learner’s identity and its impact on learning during my Masters courses at SFU, I became more aware as to how to help my daughter construct her Muslim learner identity starting from home.

4.7.5. Sarah's Muslim Identity in connection to mine.

My critical reflective process takes me forward and backward from the present to past, then again to present. At this point, I would like to inform my readers a connection between Sarah's Muslim identity and mine. It is regarding my experience of forming my Muslim identity in Canada that I had mentioned briefly earlier in Chapter 1 (see My Personal Interest in the Study Section). Because of the fear that I might face different harassment of being a Muslim woman wearing hijab, I was encouraged by my husband to take my hijab off as soon as we landed in Canada. However, without hijab I was feeling very uncomfortable, unconfident psychologically. In order to get my confidence back, I had started making more friends with a hidden desire in the corner of my heart that I could be able to drive away the misconception around my culture. Because of my knowledge in English as my capital along with my other qualities like sociability, friendliness, and extroversion I did not find difficulty making as many Canadian friends as friends from other cultures. I have always adjusted myself according to the expectations of the culture in each situation. For example, I join my friends celebrating Christmas at their places and invite them celebrating belated Eid (Muslim religious festival) at mine on later dates because we can hardly celebrate them on their original dates because of non-stat holidays (Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter Monday, Labour day are some of the stat holidays celebrated in Canada). Fascinated by my English, many newcomers or new learners of English sought help from me giving me the "proud" identity of an L2 (English as a Second Language) teacher in an English country that encouraged me to volunteer thousands of hours in the settlement programs in Canada. However, after two years as I found that I have my every right to follow my culture in a multicultural country, I had decided to wear my head scarf again which raised some questions among some of my friends; however, I was able to go through that uncomfortable stage to some extent if not one hundred percent. I am the same person with or without the scarf though my feelings were different. However, at the back of my mind I still have had an uneasy feeling whether people are accepting me the same as they did before when I did not show my cultural identity. Every time I hear any breaking news of the Islamic terrorists attacking on non-Muslim communities in Canada or around the world, I find it difficult to carry on conversations next day with other non-Muslim parents

waiting to pick up their kids from school. I always feel terrible after each and every attack, but I cannot share it with my acquaintances since I do not know how they will take it. A person in my position finds it difficult again playing the same role in and out of my community in these situations. It is therefore now becoming a challenge for educators to understand how socially constructed attitudes toward one another affecting people of certain religions.

Since I had the experience of uncomfortable feelings of being a Muslim in the present world, I can feel how Sarah feels on a regular basis. Both of us faced challenges in expressing ourselves not due to the lack of knowledge of English but lack of the knowledge how to negotiate our identities in the midst of the dominant communities. Sarah might have got lessons from my experience since children learn from the stances of the people around them and reflect them with the people they deal with (Bateson, 2009). Now, I have come along the way as to how to negotiate my Muslim identity with my students because of my position as a teacher in a college; but, for Sarah as an adolescent it is more challenging. In Figure 2, I attempt to illustrate how I have used critical analysis of Sarah's learner identity in the school with connections to my Muslim identity to build initiatives to help her construct a more positive Muslim identity for herself.

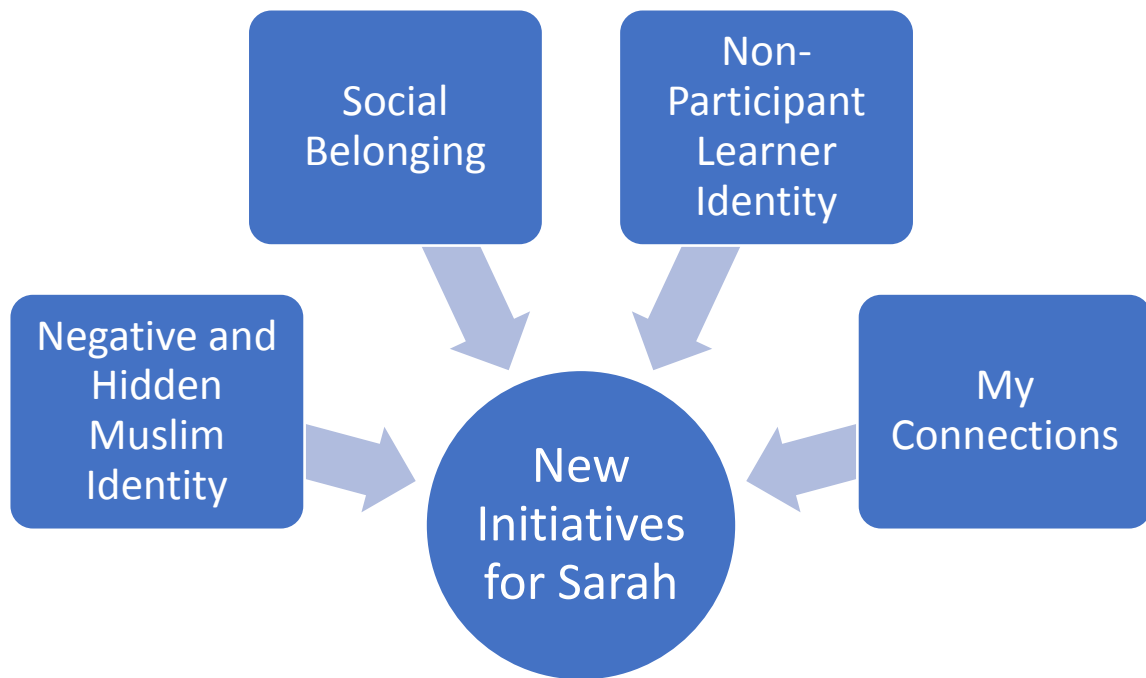


Figure 2. Schematic representation of Sarah's Learner Identity at school and my connections toward building new initiatives towards building positive identities for Sarah.

4.7.6. My Initiatives Towards Strengthening Sarah's Positive Muslim Identity

After the event of Sarah's exposure to 9/11 from the mainstream perspective followed by my additional perspective on it, I had taken some initiatives in order to help Sarah form stronger learner identity as a Muslim. As soon as I came to know from her that most of her classmates who contributed to the class discussion about the 9/11 event are allowed to watch news, I started encouraging her to do that with parental supervision. I was hoping that she will be knowledgeable about the contemporary events of the world and more importantly she will be able to participate in her classroom and thereby be able to give her perspective on an issue. However, the irony is with the everyday negative news on TV like the Canadian parliament attack, Paris attack by the Muslim terrorists her construction of Muslim identity has been getting worse. Every time she saw any news item about any attack, shooting, or destruction she comes out running asking about the attacker, "Is he a Muslim?".

Moreover, as a parent of a Muslim adolescent, I was prevented by Sarah from disclosing her Muslim identity to her teachers and peers; however, that did not stop me from thinking how I can help her. I did so in the following ways:

- Planned to take two days off from work and Sarah's school (if possible) for two Eids in a year and celebrate them as a family with Muslim and non-Muslim friends.
- Planned to invite her non-Muslim friends with their parents during Eid celebrations with the hope that it might make her feel comfortable and proud again about her religion.
- Planned to prepare some traditional sweets or buy candies/ chocolates to share with her class during Eid days.
- Started sending her to Islamic education center during the weekend so that she has experiences outside of being a visible minority.

All of these attempts were not successful. Although Sarah's religious affiliation generally tracks with ours, our family efforts to religiously socialize her may lead to result different from what as parents we had intended (Abo-Zena, 2012). Regarding taking days off from her school during Eid days, I failed to convince Sarah to do so since she is still not ready to inform her school and teacher officially about her religious affiliation. In regard to taking food to school to share with her class, she is again not willing to do that; even if she does that she told me she should not mention the occasion. She did not want to do so probably because she did not want to be in the spotlight, or she did not want to be spokesperson for Muslims, or did not want to be singled out from her peers especially after 9/11 when prejudice becomes integral to the narratives of Muslim youth (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Regarding the Islamic education center where she is learning Arabic language, Islamic culture, and things that can help the Muslim adolescents face the present challenges regarding the post 9/11 Muslim identity construction, I have to be always careful by following it up with her that whatever she is learning from the center goes along the discourse of the dominant society about Islam and Muslims. The other issue is since there are many counter attacks or revenge on Muslims from other religious groups, a fear always clouds me in this post 9/11 Western world.

4.7.7. My Own Transition and Transformation

My daughter's experience at school helped me experience transitions and transformations as a Muslim (See Figure 3). This reflection helped me understand how my views and beliefs as an adult are almost the same with young learners like my daughter. While I first thought about the topic of this paper: identity construction of Muslims in post 9/11 western world, I was not feeling comfortable about talking or sharing my ideas with my SFU peers. I was feeling cautious in choosing my words since I know all the discourses I choose convey an identity of me in a particular way. My words position me as the author of my speech. To sum up, I have become highly concerned about outlining, organizing, and writing this paper to create multiple possibilities or identities that may or may not be negotiated in a multicultural community. While educating my daughter, I became more aware of my identity as a Muslim and my responsibilities as a Muslim mom. As a Muslim teacher, I also realize that how much I know about the present-day Muslims actually comes from the dominant media with little combination of my own perception. Writing this reflection urges me to learn more about the history of the relationships of Muslims and the West: how and when it started and how that has been influencing learners in forming their identities. Over the ages, we, human beings, have invented artistic, philosophical, mimetic, communal, and poetic languages to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings, and most importantly to seek to be reunited with the ground of our lived experiences. My research interest rises from the same source: to turn in a new way to the world; to begin to think differently by having undergone interior renewal (van Manen, 1990), and it may interest others in the same way since according to Jalongo and Isenberg (1995), sharing real life experiences triggers others to learn and to find any similar situation or circumstances which they can further explore.

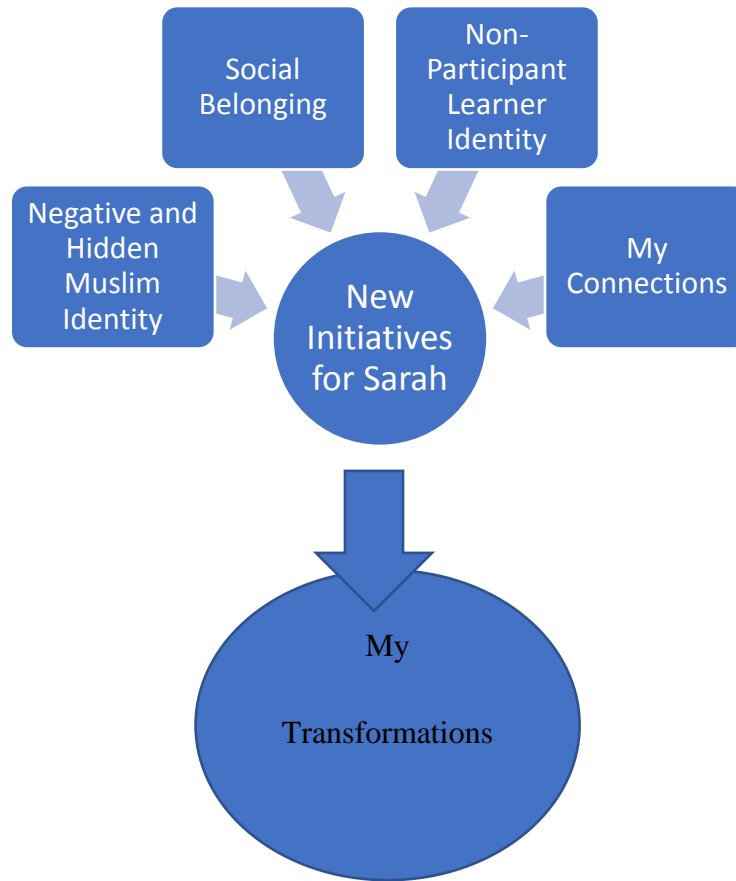


Figure 3. Sarah’s negotiation of identities and my own transformation

4.7.8. Summary

To sum up, in this chapter, I initiated describing, interpreting, self-reflecting, and critically analyzing a phenomenon to better understand part of Sarah’s life while she acted with consciousness in her classroom being aware of her Muslim identity. That moment was significant to me since it was not like what she acts like on a regular basis as an individual but how she acted on that special circumstances with her classroom community. Whatever Sarah did, she did not do that unconsciously, rather she did that with her full conscience that was generated from her lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

Through this reflective writing, I am trying to make meaning of her lived experiences which involves reflecting (Dewey, 1910) on the reasons behind events. While writing, this paper, I experienced the processes involved from raw materials to meaningful story, as Bateson (1994) asserts, “the process of spiraling through memory to

weave connections of incidents is basic to learning, so that in this and perhaps other ways the text is a demonstration of its subject matter” (p. 11).

I analyzed the incident socially and culturally, which developed my knowledge and skills as well as shaped my current disposition. This reflection reveals a fresh understanding of my daughter’s Muslim identity that will improve my personal and professional knowledge as a Muslim educator. During the stages of my reflection and critical reflection on the event, I had undertaken some initiatives that made me feel better as a Muslim; however, I have not been able to resolve what my daughter is experiencing. I aimed to bring change in my daughter’s life by encouraging her forming positive Muslim learner identity; however, I should not forget that the change I aimed for may have different significance for different persons.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1. Overview

In this chapter, I discuss the Muslim learner identity construction of Sarah in a classroom in reference to my knowledge derived from the theories (Chapter 2) and three areas of literature that I have reviewed in Chapter 3. To review those three areas were: English language learning as a means of integration and belonging in a western country, Muslim L2 learners' problem of social integration, and their construction of multiple identities. In a multicultural country like Canada, it is highly important to investigate the forces driving towards identity formations of Muslim learners and their impact on individuals and on society as a whole. Especially the ways in which Muslim adolescents understand and interpret their identity and their experiences at school, and how these are interpreted and managed by educational leaders/teachers are significant for the debates on their integration and belonging.

5.2. Sarah's Acceptance of the Dominant Discourse Around Muslims over Mine: Sarah's Prescribed Muslim Identity Formation

Very young children are typically not self-reflective about their identities and ascribed statuses (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Elkind, 1964 as cited in Peek, 2005). They are sometimes not self-reflective regarding their religious background during the first stage of religious identity development and their behaviour. For example, practices required by their parents such as dressing modestly or attending religion classes at a mosque may reflect a Muslim religious identity, regardless of whether as children they understand why they are doing such things. Individuals absorb and internalize many norms, values, and behaviors when they see them exemplified by their parents, peers, and others long before they understand them intellectually (Peek, 2005). Sarah was following her parents' religion at home and in the Muslim community as an ascribed Muslim identity. As parents, we did not put any pressure on her; however, she started praying and

fasting which made me think that she had taken her Muslim identity as chosen identity, but this might not be the real case. Unlike the adults who have the capacity to select and therefore, assert a variety of social and individual identities, children are more likely to adhere to assigned identities (Adams & Marshall, 1996 as cited in Peek, 2005). Similarly, Sarah views religion as an ascribed characteristic of herself and the social world. At this age, she engages in very little critical reflection regarding the meaning of “being Muslim”, because she has taken that identity for granted as part of her everyday life (Peek, 2005) at her home. However, when I asked her to identify herself as a Muslim and give her own thoughts about Muslims in her class, she did not take my prescribed identity in order to show her integration to her classroom community.

After my reflection on the event, I realized that while educating Sarah on that evening, I was very careful in the language use. In that particular situation, I had to be very aware that I don’t want to use any emotional language about the West, Islam, and relationship between Muslims and the West. I also did not want to make it contradictory/confusing commentary that does not go along with the dominant discourse. It was at the back of mind that she should not say or produce anything in class that would make her stand out. The way I educated her at home was because “family is not a self-contained institution” (Canagarajah 2008, p. 170): it has to take into consideration various social and political pressures. From my experience, I have realized that Muslim families may face various challenges and difficulties in educating their children in regard to maintaining their Muslim cultural heritage as they have to negotiate with the discourses produced by media and compete with mainstream values. The discourse around her race, created in the media and among non-Muslim communities, might put extra pressure on me in creating a sense that Muslims are constantly under scrutiny in terms of what they say or how they behave.

Looking back on my conversation educating Sarah about the 9/11 incident, I noticed my use of my language. During my chat, I used “*Good Muslim*” versus “*Bad Muslim*” unlike Mamdani’s use of the terms in their political connotation: “Whether in Afghanistan, Palestine, or Pakistan, Islam must be quarantined and the devil must be exorcized from it by a civil war between good Muslims and bad Muslims” (Mamdani, 2002, as cited in Tindongan, 2011, p. 82). However, at the back of my mind, I was also

hoping that Sarah should not learn or use any words that will challenge the dominant discourse and put her scrutiny. Thus, as a mom, I failed to teach her the functional language as to how to resist the Islamophobic discourse. Therefore, she took an “unresponsive”, “unwilling-participant” learner identity; whereas as teachers, we are supposed to keep students’ wellbeing in our minds and teach students in a safe environment to express themselves freely as Schon (1998) admits:

Listening to kids and responding to them, inventing and testing responses likely to help them get over their particular difficulties in understanding something, helping them build on what they already know, helping them discover what they already know but cannot say. (p. 19)

It was not possible as a mom to experience what Sarah had experienced. For the fulfilment of human nature: to become more fully who one is, Sarah did not want to say what I have told her to do or to say. As a mother, it is not my active responsibility for her growth. It is her job to act, behave, or talk.

5.3. Social Belonging in the Class: Sarah’s Appropriation of the Mainstream Narratives of her Class about Muslims

Classrooms are considered as important sites of human possibility, because it is in the classrooms where teachers and students struggle over social and cultural values (Simon, as cited in Norton & Kamal, 1992). However, Sarah’s classroom, a site of her struggle over her religious faith, did not function as a site of possibility for her. Learning in a classroom is a social process in which culturally and historically situated participants take part in culturally valued activities (using cultural tools i.e. language, or topics like Christmas and/or 9/11 etc.) with others (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000). As a Muslim learner, Sarah did not have full access to her cultural resources to represent Islam and Muslims positively. When the opportunity came to Sarah to talk about her culture during discussion about “Muslims”, she resisted to take part because of the negative message about her culture. Her unwillingness to be fully invested (Bourdieu, 1977; Norton, 1998) relates more as to how she wants to relate to the social world rather to her inability to be better understood. The incident gave advantage to the dominant community to participate putting Sarah–minority Muslim students–in the disadvantaged group.

As adolescents, there is a significant pressure to fit in or "be cool" (Adler & Adler, 1998). It is, therefore, not surprising that some of the Muslim interviewees in previous studies (see Chapter 3: Literature Review) said that during their younger years, in the early stages of identity development regardless of their religious affiliation, they cast off their religious identity in an attempt to "pass" as part of mainstream society. This is not something they were proud of, but they explained their behavior as a result of their need to fit in. This form of socialization is similar to Swidler's (1986, as cited in Peek, 2005) notion of culture as a repertoire of capacities from which varying strategies of action may be constructed. According to Swidler, even if people do not carefully consider the impact or dictates of culture, it still provides the rituals and traditions that regulate ordinary patterns of authority, cooperation, and interaction. During this stage of identity formation, learners are aware of the pressure to assimilate to "Canadian" values and norms which results in various identity management strategies. In order to socialize into the mainstream society, Sarah in her case adapted herself by adopting the mainstream discourse as hers by bypassing her Muslim identity.

Sarah as an adolescent might have felt the pressures of the prevalent social discourses. In this case, Sarah's teacher, her peers, and negative discourse about her religion have come to restrict, widen, or question the nature and ground of her Muslimhood. In order to understand what it means to be a Muslim adolescent in our present age is also to understand the pressures of these structures. To search for the fullness of her living, for the ways an adolescent possibly can experience the world as a Muslim, one needs to be a Muslim adolescent. Since Sarah's teacher and peers were using the dominant discourse, she did the same. Thus, she engaged herself in a dialogic process of appropriating mainstream narratives and making her own from the social discourses of her peers (Black, 2006). Pennycook (2005, as cited in Fotovatian 2013, 2015) advocates the need for a 'pedagogy of flow', arguing that 'students can no longer be understood as located in a bounded time and space in and around their classrooms, but rather are participants in a much broader set of trans-cultural practices' (29). Therefore, when Sarah did not participate, she probably did not just think of her teacher and grades in her writing; she had to think about her friends and outside the four walls of her classroom.

5.4. Sarah's Living in a Liminal Space with her Hidden Muslim Identity

Sarah, in terms of her position of forming Muslim identity, was taking the strategy of living in a liminal space (See Figure 4), in between the Muslim and dominant Canadian cultures, but at school she did not want to devalue the dominant norms. She found herself “in-between” Muslim and competing dominant cultural practice. This ‘in-between’ or hybrid space, also referred to as a “third space”, is one in which new knowledge becomes available to students as resources for learning (Bhabha, 1994). As a parent, I wanted her to take up Muslim identity as a chosen and declared identity; however, she was feeling rather stigmatized and hiding her Muslim identity. It is not very easy for an adolescent like her to cope with the Western dominant culture and to construct declared Muslim Identity. She needs to understand the true meaning of Islam and learn to discursively refigure herself within post-9/11 narratives with her own agentive nature as the two Muslim participants of Giroir (2014) did. Those participants were able to take up their positions against Islamophobic discourses since at certain age, learners are able to negotiate and come to an understanding of gaining more positive experiences, but adolescents coming from Muslim backgrounds living in a Christian dominated society may be deprived of that capability due to their young age. Thus, living in the liminal space of the adolescent developmental processes of emerging identities in the public-school environment may become highly complex and often a confusing state of mind for young people. Growing up requires walking through emotional mine fields at best, but for immigrant students from marginalized groups the journey may be daunting (Tindongan, 2011).

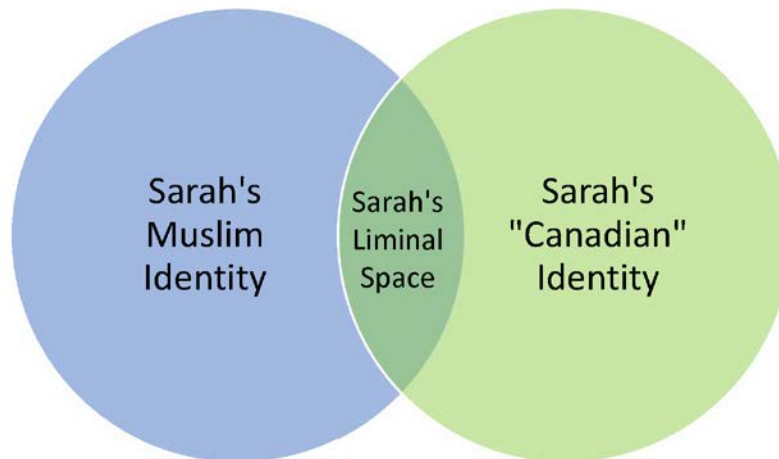


Figure 4. Sarah's Liminal Space

5.5. Sarah's Hidden Muslim Identity Related to her Psychological Stress as an Adolescent

Sarah may have tried to cope with variety of situations in her classroom by hiding her Muslim identity, like the pivotal one that I have analyzed, and in doing so she had felt a sense of internal conflict. She might have experienced a constant strain in sustaining a false identity. She might be worried about slipping and letting out information unawares. In that situation, she might also have suffered psychological trauma from leading what she felt was an unauthentic life, a kind of self-betrayal (especially if she had not internalized the idea that her "problem" is not her identity but society's response to that identity). Her hidden identity may also cause a kind of muffling of discussion in the classroom among her peers and teacher, in which no one is sure whether members of the group (Muslims) being discussed are present and everyone is tiptoeing around the topic or, worse still, everybody blithely assumes no members of the group in question are present. She might feel fear, knowing that there may be a possible consequence of being accepted by her friends or losing them. So, she was torn and expended much energy on wondering what she should do, when she should do it, and what the consequences will be. As a parent, my worry is her inner conflict may take up a tremendous amount of her emotional energy and may affect her studies. The hidden conflicts felt by her, along with her hidden identity itself, may affect the other members of her classroom community.

The reason for the effects may be mysterious to the other participants, but they will likely sense that something is hidden and is causing distress. As Vandrick (1997) mentioned,

So, all these hidden identities, both objective and psychological, form an iceberg below the surface in the classroom. They are the hidden context that may be much more important than the tip of the iceberg above the surface-the more obvious identities openly revealed. This huge hidden area is all the more potent because it is seldom or only superficially acknowledged. (p. 155)

5.6. Sarah's Non-Participant Learner Identity: Her Proficiency in English and Belonging to the Class Community

Sarah's case illuminates that the Muslim learners' language proficiency may not always translate into the dominant society, even though proficiency in English is considered one of the primary components of membership, national identity and a "rightful" place in society (Blommaert, 2006). This finding may serve as a critique of the assumption that L2 learning leads to or results in a secure sense of belonging and membership in the Canadian context. Although English is sought after by almost all new immigrants and perceived to be "key" to the process of integration in Canada, learning English by itself is, after all, not the "key" (Warriner, 2007). Sarah's proficiency in English does not confirm her integration into society since she had the fear that disclosing truth about her Muslim identity might limit her belonging to the class community. Her English language proficiency does not automatically result in full and equal participation. Her position in classroom may be like those of many who remain excluded from meaningful participation even after years of commitment as an L2 learner. Ideologies about L2 learning and integration, together with hostile discourses of Muslims and differences, influence and are influenced by the complicated and contradictory nature of individual practices and beliefs. For example, although Sarah accepts the dominant ideology that her English learning would enable her integration/belonging in a multicultural society faster, her lived experience as a learner with Muslim identity illustrates how very complicated it can be to transform this rhetoric into reality. Sarah realized that everyone was responding according to the discourse of the dominant

narrative, so she did the same. If she had not negotiated with the discourse of her classroom community, she would be similar to the participant named, Henna in Peek's (2005) study who said, "I identified much less with being Muslim. --- [Because] [y]ou don't want to stick out too much. You don't want people to think you're a weirdo" (p. 226).

Along with Sarah's proficiency in English, she must learn the discourse-attitudes, prejudices, myths of the English language community around her religion that is used by her classmates in order to belong to that community. At the same time, she must remember her own language or culture or information that she gathered from her parents and she must be adept at transitioning from one to the other, never forgetting where each voice must be used (Bakhtin, 1981). While going through the process of immersion in a different culture, Sarah has to adapt not only to what adults (parents, teachers, media etc.) can explain but also to things for which she has no words (Bateson, 2009). In this respect, the problem lies with the fact of the source of the knowledge ELLs and mainstream students are bringing to the classrooms. There might be conflict between the knowledge the majority is bringing into the class gained from available media (TV news, newspapers, or their parents) and the Muslim students are bringing from their parents, families, and media (which may be dominant media or from other sources of information). Since the traditional approach of teaching English at school is to frame the problems that ELLs encounter in learning literacy as internal-to-the-learner deficiencies in English vocabulary, syntax, semantics, phonology and/or background knowledge of the topic, how teachers in a Christian dominant culture handle the knowledge brought from Muslim culture requires further study. A study commissioned by CRE (2005) stated:

It would seem that the emotional significance attached to Islam has grown in strength over the recent past, as issues in the public domain (such as the conflict in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and London) have been construed as antagonistic relations specifically between Muslims and Christians. (p. 38)

Based on Duff's theory (2007), it is argued that intercultural communication strategies have the potential to index participation, engagement, and integration. For

example, in the context of this study, Sarah chose to participate in some classroom practices and avoided participation in several others. The participation strategies in use have the potential to reflect the dynamic language, social, and cultural power play inherent in an asymmetrical classroom context.

Sarah already establishes her strategies of how to belong to a classroom community. Participation and engagement used to be Sarah's goal; now it seems that integration is more important to her than being invested since she does not want to be left behind. Sarah wants to learn through her non-participation in order to belong to her classroom community of practice as Duff (2007) pointed out. The issues related to her religion had never come forward before, so Sarah did not have to worry about her peers' thought about her sense of belonging. However, now that it came up to the class, she has to be strategic.

Usually, language policy has three components: language belief referring to ideologies behind it; language practices referring to the ecology of language and emphasize the actual language use in different contexts and for various reasons; and language management (Spolsky 2004; Shohamy, 2006 as cited in Curdt-Christiansen, 2009) referring to specific actions undertaken to intervene or influence language practices (Spolsky, 2004, 2009 as cited in Curdt-Christiansen). In Sarah's case, she followed all the components. First, the language belief that her class had regarding Muslims she took for granted. To put it differently, Sarah accepted the discourse about Muslims - "All Muslims are terrorists" - that was available in her classroom community. Second, she practiced the same language that they practiced without adding anything to it. She did not take any other action that might influence the language use of her classmates. Since any language ideology is context specific and is the combination of cultural and linguistic aspects of the social structure, Sarah in that particular context, ignored or hid her cultural aspect and accepted the discourse of her classroom. Third, through her use of language—by appropriating local discourse about her religion, she fostered a sense of non-Muslim identity. Her social relations with her teacher and her classmates were "reflected and reproduced" (Ricento 2006, p. 15) through the use of local discourses around her religion in the classroom context. In this case, with a view of discourse as an activity and a practice, as well as "a social, cultural, or political phenomenon" (Bucholtz, 2003), the

kind of discourse that is used in Sarah's classroom can become a site of meaningful social differences, of conflict and struggle, and this may result in social-structural effects i.e. learning in a classroom (Blommaert, 2005).

Sarah and her peers' acceptance of the dominant discourse of the media or narrative gives rise to the thought as to whose culture is coming forward and whose are missing or getting lost (Macpherson Report, 1999). In a Christian dominated classroom, if only the negative discourse around a religion is available, then there will be chances for the positive version of the story to disappear. However, students have the right to hear any possible stories from parents as well as from teachers. This will save them from the "Danger of a Single Story" (Adichie, 2009). The stories should have coherence in order not to confuse the students' minds with the differences but to rationalize the lives of the multi-faith students with the aim to provide better learning opportunities. The question that remains is whether Sarah will be able to construct her "declared Muslim identity" as one of her multiple identities. If she will, then how much she would be able to integrate or belong to her classroom. Thus, the pivotal moment that I have discussed emphasizes how much we need to know to develop strong positive relations among schools, communities, and homes (Sarroub, 2005); however, how we can do that requires further research.

5.7. Summary

I have analyzed a pivotal moment in my daughter's classroom along with few others to illustrate how she constructed her Muslim identity in her classroom. It was her awareness of the possibilities of selfhood that influenced how she constructed her identities that allowed or restricted her from expressing her individual interest, experiences, and opinions. Navigating multiple identities between her family setting and mainstream Canadian culture is demanding because of the everyday discourse about the religion. However, a multicultural classroom in Canada of many traditions and cultures can be a school of life where students from different cultures and religions may alternately feel unique, proud, and welcomed. Despite the scholarly recognition of multicompetences (Cook, 1999) of immigrants, monolingual and monocultural ideologies among mainstream students can result in marginalization of minority groups and can

contribute to having divided communities. It appears Sarah felt “ashamed”/ “stigmatized” in her class. To promote acceptance and respect for diversity, and to harness our imaginations in the pursuit of peace, students like Sarah could learn that cultural differences are not seen as an element leading to trouble and conflict, and differences can also produce rapport among peers from the mainstream. The study further provided contexts for an interrogation into the ways the politics of language and culture are woven into the process of identity construction and social representations and the role institutional practices play in consolidating or marginalizing their members, in amplifying or suppressing voices. The suppression of voice of Muslim students as minority groups may create conditions that can potentially lead to non-participation resulting in an intense loss of self-esteem and identity.

Chapter 6. Summary of Findings, Limitations, Implications, Recommendations, Further Research, and Final Thoughts

6.1. Overview

In this thesis, I set out to explore how my daughter, Sarah, a Muslim adolescent constructed her multiple identities as a Muslim learner in the post 9/11 context in a non-Muslim country. In the previous chapters, I presented pivotal moment in the learner's life, then I reflected on her experiences followed by discussions about how my research questions and the findings explain the features of constructing her Muslim identity in a language classroom. In this chapter I discuss the limitations of the study followed by some implications for the teaching of English language to students of Muslim cultural background. Next, I give some recommendations for teachers, educators, and parents. Finally, I suggest some further research on the issue followed by some final thoughts.

6.2. Summary of Findings

Contemporary anti-Muslim sentiment: stereotypes of Islam and Muslims, perceptions of threat and inferiority, as well as fantasies that the Other (in this case Muslims) do not belong or are absent, gives rise to complex learner identities in today's classrooms. Findings show how Islamophobia in the West may create sense of alien-ness and Otherness among Muslims. The negative media treatment which is linked to Islamophobia also corrupts the sense of belonging of Muslims. The findings reflect a Muslim learner's reservations, investments and agentive actions, instances of making decisions for participation or non-participation. This study may lead to understanding of a student's unique approach to integration on one hand, and the classroom practices for encouraging inclusion and integration on the other.

The assumption that non-native speakers of English will improve their English through immersion programs and intense interactions with their imagined local communities (Norton, 2006) may be misguided. Sarah's non-participation poses the

question that her declared Muslim identity may not allow her complete integration or full participation. The findings highlight the role of agency and intentionality in participation and learning through participation.

Throughout the discussion (Chapter 5), I was particularly interested in the ties between the macro -level practices of integration among diverse communities through language policy and socio-political factors influencing that integration and the micro-level experiences of engagement or disengagement of a student and her strategies for identity negotiation. I have realized that integration is the potential factor that influences a Muslim learner's decisions and actions. The study imperative here is to reflect Muslim students' voices and to investigate how they may resemble the tensions persisting in our society around their race.

6.3. Limitations of the Study

a) Choosing and writing about my daughter: A question may rise regarding selecting my daughter, Sarah, as the participant and researching her experience since this might have given me an easy access to manipulate and highlight my special obligation towards her circumstances which may lead to certain hypotheses: my perceptions about her formation of identities. I want to indicate that I have experience of seeing Sarah from birth to eleven years of age at home, at school, and at other institutions (mosque etc.), and I have also had the opportunity of recollecting memories and collecting my assumptions about her experiences in my journal for about two years (from the question arising in my mind until the time of completing my thesis paper writing). Because I have focused on her and studied her systematically, no other researcher may know her better than I do. This gives me chances to treat her as a "person" with her uniqueness of human being rather than any other "individual" (Auden, 1967 as cited in van Manen, 1990).

b) Gender Identity: In this paper, I had mentioned some experiences of my daughter but I did not focus much on her gender identity as a Muslim girl. Sometimes Muslim girls wearing "hijab" construct two different identities at home and at school (Ajrouch, 2004; Sarroub, 2005). It was discussed in Chapter 2. However, in this paper I have not analyzed my data from that perspective—from a Muslim's girl's perspective.

c) Adolescence: Research on adolescents is a vast area of study. This is the time when one faces a crisis in one's life physically and psychologically. This is a difficult age since "adolescents tend to be preoccupied by the need to belong and to reject those who are different" (Bateson, 1991, p. 25). Sirin and Fine (2007) argue that Muslim students enact the conflicts happening around them whether in a family, school, community, or social environment. Although their feelings, attitudes, and actions may be interpreted by adults as hormonal or developmental, they might be more likely personal crises in response to their troubled environment. However, I did not intend to focus much on this issue, but gave a little indication since my daughter was going through this stage and forming her adolescent Muslim learner identity.

d) Muslim Identity: Questions may also arise, why I have talked about Islam and Muslim identity because religion is considered private in the West, and teachers and students may not feel comfortable talking about it. One may also ask if it is possible to replace them with other religions and religious identity. Identities from any other religion or even identities from non-religious affiliations or atheists can be hidden as well (Vandrick, 1997). Accordingly, "Muslim learner" identity may not be always one's preferred identity.

e) Language Classroom: Questions may also arise why I have talked about English language learning and learner identity. The issues that have arisen in terms of formation of identities of Sarah may also arise in any other classrooms like science or arts rather than an English language classroom. However, since the pivotal moment that I had studied here arose in a language classroom during a discussion about a reading passage on 9/11, I was interested in finding the influence of language use in her classroom. Also as an English language teacher I have fascination to issues related to language learning and teaching. The following facts prompted me to focus on the issue of language:

- Personally, as an ESL teacher, I always take the opportunity to help Sarah with her language related homework and problems. Therefore, when she admitted that she could not participate in the classroom, that worried me to look into the matter.
- One of the functions of a language teacher is to teach functional language to the students; therefore, I intended to research more on the issue. Language

plays an important role in acquiring knowledge whether it is through the use of words or as a means of communication - as a language teacher one needs to be careful so that their negative choice of words may not influence negative identity formations of students and their learning.

However, since there is very little literature available on the issue of Muslim students' identity construction in an English language classroom, the intersection of the two in my paper may seem underdeveloped.

f) Sarah's Cultural Communication Style: Sarah's non-participation in the classroom may also be the result of her home culture - Asian culture. Asian children, both boys and girls, as noted in literature elsewhere (Connolly, 1998; Shain, 2003), are invariably typified as hard-working and diligent and inclined toward a quieter, less visible stance in school and classroom life. Another remarkable characteristic of Asian learners according to Scollon and Scollon (1995 as cited in Novera, 2004) is to be conscious of:

Who is older and who is younger, who has a higher level of education, who has a lower level, who is in a higher institutional or economic position and who is lower, or who is teacher and who is student? (p. 81)

Though Sarah, was diligent, respectful to teachers, and active participant in classrooms except when the pivotal moment occurred, her quietness may reflect her "Asian" culture to some extent, that I had not focused in my paper.

g) Study not to be Generalized: I did not investigate how Sarah's teachers and her peers were involved or looked into the pivotal moment. Her teacher's inattention to Sarah's hidden identity construction and related issues is my own interpretation from my conversation with Sarah. In my study, I did not also include any textual data—any writing or reading samples from her. Moreover, the study is conducted only on the experience of one individual; therefore, we cannot generalize the experience as Auden (1967 as cited in Van Manen, 1990) rightly said, "As persons, we are incomparable, unclassifiable, uncountable, irreplaceable" (p. 6). It is true that the feelings that I had talked about may not be the same with any other human beings; therefore, this study is limited in generalization.

h) Researcher as an Insider: As a Muslim moving to a western country and bringing up my daughter in the country, offered me some similar experiences that my daughter had experienced. Being an insider might have put me in a position of being biased. Because of the shared Muslim identity, Sarah's experience might have been impacted by the reciprocal relationship of a mother and a daughter though while reflecting: thinking and rethinking, I tried not to influence her experience with mine. Despite the limitation, I hope this study provides an in-depth understanding of a learner's construction and expression of identity as a Muslim L2 learner.

i) Literature Review: Most of the literature reviewed in this paper is taken from the contexts of the USA and the UK, not in the Canada because of its unavailability in the Canadian context. Moreover, this paper has reviewed very little literature available in the field on the issue of English language learning of Muslim students for an understanding of exploring issues related to race and language learning.

j) Limitation of my Reflection: Reflective time is usually slow in the sense that it is associated with care and attentiveness (Rose, 2013 as cited in Rokhiyah, 2015). Therefore, I found that the more I was being critical, more ways of discussion were being opened up. However, due to the time restriction, it was not possible for me to put much more care and attentiveness that might have made this paper more reflective.

k) Limitations of my Recommendations: Since I did not do the study in a classroom and I did not study the peers and teachers in regard to Sarah's experience in her classroom, the change I am aiming for through my recommendations from this study may not carry much significance in implementing in a classroom context.

6.4. Implications of this Research

a) Teacher's blind spot: Teachers in today's multicultural classroom need to be aware of aspects of culture of the students because it might affect the way they relate to their learners, and may contribute to the effectiveness of their lessons (Sowden, 2007). For example, directly looking at the teachers may be considered as impolite to the culture of students; however, the teacher may infer that student who is listening with averted eyes may be bored, confused, or angry. Teachers in this case, are unable to see what is happening in terms of their lack of awareness about the cultural differences: teachers and

students are standing in each other's cultural blind spots. For instance, when Sarah was not participating in the classroom discussion, her teacher was not aware of the fact that she was doing so since she is from Muslim cultural background or maybe she knew that, and she was diagnosing her silence as her deficiency. If a teacher coproduces a specific behaviour thinking of a particular characteristic of a student like the student is lazy, unprepared, shy, or even unintelligent, then the students will remain in the blind spots of the teacher. Student identity may be maintained positively in relation to the authority; therefore, teachers need to carefully diagnose students coming from different cultures.

b) Relationship between Teacher and Students: Sarah's hidden identity (hidden from her teacher as well as her peers) may impact her teachers' and her attitudes toward learning as well as the relationships between her teacher and her peers. A teacher may misjudge students who are not performing well in class, not knowing the hidden context for the students' performance. Students may also lose the opportunity to receive guidance or referral to appropriate resources. Students, in turn, may feel the teacher is not considerate or supportive. Students may even feel stupid or inferior (Peirce, 1995) or may be treated as such because of their inadequate English language skills to express themselves under the specific circumstances.

c) Encouraging Student Voice: Students should claim the authority of their expressions whether in class discussion, reading, or writing. They should be made conscious that their voice is also important in the class community. For instance, once they are conscious of these factors (by teachers and parents), they can be confident as L2 learners and feel more comfortable to construct their desired identities in learning. Hence teachers could encourage the students to contemplate on how they want to express themselves in their various texts, how this might vary from context to context, and how they might create particular impressions around particular topics.

d) Knowing Boundaries in a Classroom: What are the boundaries in the classroom? Which aspects of a person's identity are public, and which are private? Teachers talk about making the classroom a safe place, but can it be truly so? If teachers explicitly try to make it a safe place, how can they be sure that students will preserve that safety? And how do the ideologies and beliefs of the individuals in the classroom shape their needs to hide or reveal identities and shape their responses to the hiding or revealing

of others' identities? These are the queries that educators, teachers, students, and parents should be knowledgeable about.

6.5. Recommendations

6.5.1. Roles and responsibilities of teachers.

The role of teachers in classrooms are undoubtedly very important. Their lesson influences not only their students' academic/ intellectual development but also their personal, social, and emotional development. Teachers can change the social and political dimensions of students' life (Zeichner & Liu, 2010 as cited in Rokhiyah, 2015). Teachers are faced with situations that are complex, unique, and filled with value conflicts. In carrying out this study I have had the intention of adding to the current pedagogy to teaching and learning of English language to Muslim students by illustrating how educators or concerned content teachers could be reminded of the causes of positive or negative learning outcomes and what they could do to make both their students' learning experiences and learning environment better so that they can construct and express their Muslim identities positively and effectively. In that respect, teachers can take the following roles and responsibilities:

a) Creating In-Class Safe Space for Muslim Students: Teachers can 'create academic space for the unheard voices' (Cadman, 2005a, p. 131) where Muslim students can negotiate linguistic and cultural difference in a way that emphasizes connection and affiliation across potential barriers. For example, Nanako, an English language learner, in Black's (2006) study participated in the online space created by her teacher. That space helped her to develop confidence and motivation for continued writing and language learning in English. It also provided her with a sense of pride and a renewed emphasis on her linguistic background and ethnic identity as an Asian (Black). Similarly sharing experiences, glorious history and culture with peers, may help Muslim learners represent themselves as conversant members of the community. That space could allow the participants to assume new cultural identity which at times may differ or conflict with their "regular identities" fostering a positive sense of self by constructing distinct

identities and cultural perspectives. Teachers' work in a classroom is not just to improve/help their students develop study skills, but to see student welfare as well. Teachers need to have time for students' personal and emotional learning welfare through developing trust between the teacher and the students, and students and peers.

b) Respecting Out-of-School Space for Muslim Students: It is important to see how Muslim adolescent ELLs are positioned in schools. At the same time, it is also important to see how they choose to position themselves in out-of-school spaces like home, minority community learning center, or mosque where there is absence of imposed or ascribed social roles. Teachers need to be aware of aspects of culture which might affect the way they relate to their learners, and may contribute to the effectiveness of their lessons (Sowden, 2007). They need to let the identity of their students thrive in socializing by being members in multiple communities. Knowledge about these communities can help teachers to find third spaces/liminal spaces for their students. All these spaces are necessary in recognition to the students' current or future identity formation as well as relevant to their learning (Smythe & Toohey, 2009).

c) Enhancing Awareness of Students' Cultural Aspects: Teachers can review samples of writing or reading responses of Muslim students and compare them with later ones, because differences between their previous identities and current religious identities may cause struggle for them. They need to be sensitive to the differences these students may encounter. Teachers can string together elements of previous knowledge and explore different translations of the unfamiliar if they find any in their students' work. During classes, there can be open discussion about cultures, and the discourses that are available around certain cultures so that students from Muslim cultural background can rely on the positive acceptance of their religion in the classroom community and therefore, they can rely on constructing positive Muslim identity.

If the cultural awareness of Muslim students is developed, the possibilities of positive learning will make the learning environment equal to all rather than giving privilege to the people of certain cultures over others. To put it differently, students should be given the opportunities to understand that their differences in cultures may

position them differently, but these differences make the world, make a country, a multicultural country, a school, a community.

d) Bringing Contemporary Issues to Class: We live in an era when media often has a misleading yet strong influence on identity imposition and shaping populism. In this era, it is important for educators to assume the role of guides and informants for both the oppressed/ misrepresented and the mainstream communities. Students of other languages have to go through the process of learning the English language; therefore, language classrooms can be a space for having discussions on religions and religious identities. There is a recent acronym that I have heard from my colleagues which is a policy at a private school called “PARSNIP” (Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, Isms, Personals) that is not allowed in their language classrooms. However, I believe controversial subjects are important and should be discussed in class because they exist both inside and outside the four walls of a classroom. However, it requires extensive care and professionalism of teachers to bring them into a classroom. Therefore, in order to celebrate variety, plurality and difference of those who are traditionally excluded and in order to avoid taking risk of reproducing single stories, a lot more research is needed in the field. Culturally responsive and positive teaching/learning materials need to be brought into the classrooms in order to make Muslim students understand and feel that there is no contradiction between being a Canadian and being a Muslim.

6.5.2. Roles of teacher educators.

- a) Some steps may be taken in teacher education program like engaging teachers and staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, involving parents and listening to Muslim students, developing channels for communication despite barriers like language/culture and celebrating ethnic festivals etc.
- b) Different ways of preparing teachers to teach in multicultural contexts have been studied. Those studies have identified the importance of cross-cultural experiences and extensive field experience in developing positive attitudes to diverse students (Ladson-Billings,

2009). Even teachers of other beliefs should have knowledge of their Muslim students since limited experience tends to increase stereotypical attitudes among teachers. This needs to be focused in teacher education program.

- c) Even though relatively little research has been carried out on the topic of teacher attitudes to Muslim students, different perspectives have emerged in different studies. There are those who criticize Western teachers of Muslim students for being insensitive to Islam and Muslims and for lack of knowledge, which manifests in racist attitudes, Islamophobia, Eurocentrism, and low expectations of Muslim students (Rissanen et al., 2015). Teacher educators will be engaged in more research on Muslim and non-Muslim teachers of Muslim students.
- d) The L2 teachers should be very compassionate to the students coming from different cultures in supporting them to deal with the challenges and to reinvent their confident learner identity. Sometimes we fail to understand the cost L2 learners pay in order to accommodate themselves with the new culture. We have to realize that negative identities constructed from negative expressions may result in poor performances in L2 learning. Moreover, L2 learners highly appreciate their instructors' recognition, and support (Zamel, 1995). This fact should be focused in teacher education.

6.5.3. Roles of parents.

Management of 'Muslim identity' in educational institutions has become a sensitive issue because of its implications for educational engagement and inclusion. According to Merry (2007) as cited in Shah (2009), identity formation is a “coherent sense of self within a particular ‘cultural matrix’” (p. 75), in spite of the fact that formulations of identity are fraught with many tensions. He further argues that a learning environment culturally (or religiously) consonant with the parents is more likely to produce healthy learning outcomes for young children and is more likely to foster a

firmer sense of self. In the post 9/11 context, Muslim parents in the west have different roles to play in the lives of their children in increasing self-esteem and constructing positive/affirmative Muslim identities in particular. From my personal experience, I can suggest a few:

- It is not possible to teach the children what to say and how to say it in every situation which is part of every individual's process of negotiation. However, if they are informed by parents that when situation arises, they need to let their voice heard instead of being constrained by the expectations of the "others". Youth who take an active stance against prejudice are more empowered. Agency has antidotal qualities and the students who exercise it seem to be targeted less often than those who react more passively to aggression (Sirin & Fine, 2007).
- I have also found that in the midst of negative discourses about Muslims, some positive stories can help the students feel proud about their identity. In this regard, the glorious history of Muslims—their contributions in education, art, and history (Dozy, 1913; Shalaby, 1954 as cited in Shah, 2008) can be brought into light.

However, from my personal experience as an immigrant mother, I have realized that parents of immigrants have to work hard in order to settle in a new country and culture. They may not find it easy to educate their children by themselves; therefore, teachers have to take the role of educating Muslim students. Teachers can work together with the students and their parents in designing their life history not to simply extract information from them, but to focus on developing a reciprocal relationship between them. This parent-teacher collaborative work may help students develop their voice in areas they (teachers, parents, and students) may not have previously explored and thereby contribute in the process of identity development of Muslim students which is grounded on individual's life-worlds.

To sum up, teachers, teacher educators, and parents are in a position to think, work, choose, and design interesting language activities, materials and syllabi, and to create or adopt suitable methodologies of teaching the language at school and at home. This will maintain and sustain the Muslim minority students' positive attitudes towards

learning by forming positive Muslim identity without being restricted in classrooms. An appreciation of students' self-perceptions “may assist minority [Muslim] children in countering the negative stereotypes in the larger society” (Michael, 2005, p. 1) through enhancing the students' confidence in identity.

6.6. Future Research/Further Studies

In this study, I have examined the lived experiences of my daughter in a particular situation; hence, a study of this nature cannot be used to generalize or stereotype across a population, yet it can be used as a stepping stone for further research on a larger number of students who may categorize themselves as “Muslims”. More research—case study, ethnography study, critical ethnography on multiculturalism focusing on Muslim learners needs to be conducted in Canadian public-school context so that schools and classrooms with students from this minority cultural background carefully consider the social contexts in which these students are learning language to be integrated.

a) Research Needs in Canadian Public-School Context: Despite more focused attention to L2 learning and L2 learner identity, however, one issue that has been under researched in the field is that of Muslim learner identity and TESOL in post - 9/11 Canadian public school contexts. From studies like Housee (2011) and others it was clear that sometimes culture rather than language is the barrier in socializing for Muslim background students. Therefore, further study needs to be conducted in relation to the experiences of invisible religious minority children in their classrooms regarding language learning due to their cultural background by paying greater attention to the realities of the students' lives. Scant consideration is given to the learners with Muslim identities and how those identities are supported or rejected by curricula and school environments (Liese, 2004 as cited in Tindongan, 2011).

Moreover, studies around Islam and Muslims and TESOL communities are commonly located in the contexts of the U.S. schools and especially adult students. Study beyond the country in other contexts, especially in Canada remains an area that requires much needed research with global relevance. Since little work has honed in on the experiences of learners who identify as Muslim under the current exclusionary social and political conditions that can create complex conditions for learners and their learning,

addressing this issue in research becomes more pressing when one considers the significant increase in Muslim refugees and immigrants from Syria, Afghanistan as well as other parts of the world in Canada (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2002).

More research need to be done in examining emic perspectives on L2 learning, particularly by investigating Muslim L2 learner identity. How Muslim students might fare in culturally different school environments if they were educated in a more culturally responsive learning environment is a matter to be researched. More specifically, stories of Muslim adolescents in ESL teaching were rarely told in research; yet as I emphasize, these stories should be of concern to qualitative researchers and to teachers in order to learn about the experiences, cultural identities, and ethnic positionalities of Muslim minority adolescents. More specifically, the reasons why they feel different from those around them and position themselves or are positioned by others are salient issues to be discovered. I hope, this study will open up new ways of further study on the perspectives on language learning, illustrating how Muslim learners' identifications can impact their L2 learning processes, as well as their construction of identity in the Canadian multicultural context.

b) Case Study/Ethnographic Study: Future research can be done conducting case study or an intensive ethnographic observation using multi-method qualitative inquiry and methods, such as observing the participants in classes and interviewing the Muslim participants, their teachers, peers, and parents. This may provide rich data with different perspectives on Muslim learners' construction of identities. For example, an in-depth longitudinal case study will allow L2 writing researchers to understand student writers' trajectories to grow and develop personally and academically through their multiple interactions with texts, classrooms, and teachers.

c) Critical Ethnographic Study: Critical ethnographic study could be conducted in this regard to advocate for the marginalized, minority Muslims in society. Critical researchers might study schools that provide privileges to certain types of students over others, or counseling practices that serve to overlook the needs of underrepresented groups (i.e. Muslims). An important role of a critical ethnographer is to empower people by giving them more authority, challenging the status quo, and addressing concerns about power and control (Norton, 2001; Toohey, 2009). A critical ethnographer will study

issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony and victimization.

d) Study on Multiculturalism focusing on Muslim Learners: The current emphasis in the Canadian Government's policies on 'multiculturalism' hints at cultural intersections, highlighting the significance of redefining the scope and interpretation of different concepts to develop policies and practices more appropriate to multi-ethnic context. Derogatory expressions media and elsewhere that contribute to negative identity construction of Muslim learners are examples of violations of multiculturalism. In case of such violations, the dominant values, practices, assumptions, all may become challenged overtly or covertly, making the educational sites locations for the interplay of competing notions and discourses (Foucault 1982). By creating atmosphere for Muslim learners forming positive Muslim identity, mainstream society may propose respect to diversity emphasizing that everyone has rights and responsibilities in relation to everyone.

6.7. My Future Plan/ Study Precipitated by this Study

In my study, I did not include any textual data—any writing or reading samples from my daughter's reading or writing documents since I did not obtain ethics approval from my university. Future research with those samples written at a school context would provide a more comprehensive (concrete) picture of constructing Muslim identities of adolescents. It will be interesting to see future research on Muslim students drawing on Foucault's (1982) concept of disciplining of discourse referring to who is allowed to speak and, therefore, who can be heard. Teachers who help language learners claim the right to speak might be interviewed as well to find out what kind of pedagogy might help learners claim the right to speak. Teachers as well as only few educators have time to conduct a community scan (Smythe and Toohey, 2009) to find how their students are forming identities in and out their classrooms. Moreover, some parents take steps for their children to provide access to their cultural heritage through institutionalized Arabic schooling on weekends; however, under the scrutiny of Muslims after 9/11, others like me are unwilling to carry on their children's learning from Islamic learning centres. In this regard, future studies may also include exploring parental perspectives on what happens in various institutions outside the home in relation to their children's formation

or Muslim identity so that their lived experiences and Muslim identities can be incorporated. Therefore, to this end, I look forward to future conversations with the children, their families, and Muslim community, as well as their teachers in public school as Smythe and Toohey (2009) correctly pointed out about the diversity in a multicultural society that “we [need to] pursue critical questions of who constitutes the ‘public’ in public schooling and what the role of public schools can and should be in a --- [diverse multicultural] society” (p. 54).

6.8. Final Thoughts

This paper is written in an attempt help to solve a real-world problem faced by my 11-year old daughter, Sarah while constructing her Muslim identity in the context of the west. The study is based on my insights of constructing identity, an important issue in education, that I have gained and developed as being a student and an educator at the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University (SFU). My knowledge about identity and learning gained from my courses taken at SFU helped me reflect on my own Muslim identity that started impacting my academic life and personal life while educating my daughter when a pivotal moment occurred in her life in a Canadian public-school classroom. My new experience in a new country has encouraged me to become a different person. Therefore, based on my personal reflection on Muslim identity and my experience as a non-native English teacher, and most importantly my experience as a mom of an adolescent made me realize the existence of my multiple identities and the ways I brought significant changes in my identity negotiation. I decided to conduct this research, which I hoped would provide some insight into these issues and help me to have better understanding in my future career as a teacher.

I have examined an individual’s experiences and identities, with the assumption that those experiences and identities are constructed or influenced by specific situations for specific purposes. I have found that individual actions and practices are not only circumscribed (restricted) but also influenced by larger social structures. This fact demonstrates a complicated way that an individual’s experience may challenge master narratives that promulgate the importance of learning English for socialization and

belonging. Even after residing in Canada for six years, with explicit knowledge of the English language, one's learning and learner identity might be influenced by dominant discourse that views the differences as problems (Ruiz, 1994 as cited in Warriner, 2007) and may not give access to the inclusion of Muslim minorities.

This paper has, therefore, three related dimensions: a pivotal moment in Sarah's classroom life in relation to a discussion about 9/11, construction of her Muslim identity at the intersection of the religion and post 9/11 discourses of Islamophobia, and what contributions it can make to learners' belonging to the mainstream society. The study illustrates how Muslim identity emerges in social and historical context and urges that development of this identity is necessary for a learner. Additionally, I discuss the impacts of 9/11 and show how those impel a particular identity, in this case, "hidden Muslim identity" due to the damage by dominant narratives. Sarah, coming from a Muslim family, tried to hide her true identity and identify as a non-Muslim because of the existing discourse around Islam and because she was in a classroom that is considered as multicultural but largely Christian populated.

The study thus may question the existing approach to multiculturalism in Canada (e.g. inclusion, integration, cultural pluralism, widening participation and celebrating diversity). Multiculturalism can become mere catchword if not underpinned by a genuine belief in respect for difference (Nieto, 2004; Luciak, 2006 as cited in Shah, 2008) the students contribute to the Canadian public-school classrooms. The negative images and attitudes shown on Media are likely to shape Muslim adolescents' interactions with peers, thus creating an environment where difference may not be respected; rather, they are set up to be easily 'othered'. This 'othering' is manifested in the overrepresentation of news coverage of people and events presumably associated with Islam (Bayoumi, 2008; Abu El-Haj, 2010; Jackson, 2010 as cited in Tindongan, 2011). In this case, a change in attitudes towards the new 'other', in particular towards Muslims, is required.

One problem with education, and social policies and practices, lies in the fact that they often claim to be addressing the needs of people coming from different cultures while taking little account of those people's constructions of identities. Positive identity constructions, achievement and social cohesion are interlinked and can be improved by respecting diversity, by enhancing the students' confidence in identity and cultural

heritage, and by strengthening the notion of equality in relationships. It is proposed that these can be facilitated through drawing upon ethnic knowledge sources and concepts of Muslims. The tragic events of 9/11 have further intensified the need to learn more about Islam and Muslims, to develop understanding and harmony. This appears to be a point in time when drawing upon diverse philosophies and perspectives might be welcomed, or even actively sought in the interest of educational enhancement and societal well-being.

Schools need to aim for “culturally coherent education” (Michael, 2005) which should encourage and value hybrid identities, which may not necessarily be conflictual. In the case of Muslim students, faith emerges as a significant factor in their identity formations, and therefore recognising its role and significance and appropriate provisions should underpin future policies regarding education and inclusion. School leaders in multiethnic societies certainly need to cultivate commonalities for all practical purposes and for social cohesion, but the need is also to be sensitive to ethnic and faith difference, developing “a respect for persons as individuals and for the collectives, to which people have a sense of belonging” (Modood et al., 1997, p. 359) by respecting diversity and by strengthening the notion of equality in relationships.

If Canadian public schools fail to recognize the needs of Muslim learners, they would go to private schools or their cultural learning centres (Smith, 2002). This may lead to emergence of private schools managed by religious and educational leaders to address the issues of inclusion and learners’ identity. Many Independent Islamic schools, commonly known as faith schools in the UK showed better academic excellence for Muslim learners than the state maintained schools (Shah, 2008). As the majority of Muslims continue to be educated in non-Muslim public schools in Canada, it is important that the government and the schools make practical decisions to ensure the accommodation of religious needs. An improved understanding of Islam and Muslim values among staff and school communities in general can enhance mutual accommodation of needs and acceptance. It is only when individuals from all religious, ethnic and other orientations are acknowledged as equally valued “fellow citizens” that the issue of students' achievement can be considered in proper perspective. Admittedly, every school context is a unique context; however, an inclusive school should make schooling a positive experience for all the students.

I end my thesis with my reflection on my experience of expressing my Muslim identity. I have noticed that my Muslim identity has also shifted, conflicted, and negotiated since I have started my journey in a western country, Canada, facing the challenges, if not overtly but covertly, as my daughter Sarah is facing now. I remember, I did not feel comfortable even while talking about my research query to the academics and non-academic friends of mine having the feeling that I would probably be misunderstood as being biased; however, now I have gained confidence to talk about the issue. I want to agree with Stark (1989) that:

Working on this dissertation I gained not only an understanding of my being-as-researcher, but I also began to understand more about my being-in-the-world as one-caring and my potential to be a pedagogue ... I was forced to question my taken-for-granted assumptions and to discover what certain experiences really meant to me. (p. 209)

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